Week 12: *Genesis 47:1-12*

**Hook**

Main Point: God always provides for His people, sometimes in unexpected ways.

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Since 1979, *Antiques Roadshow* has been a television program that has caused many a person to search their homes for potential treasures. The show provides the public with an opportunity to bring their items for appraisal, often delighting the owners with a large estimate for a seemingly ordinary item. Perhaps the most exciting moments are those in which owners who are in financial need discover that an heirloom is extremely valuable.

Teacher, pull up the PowerPoint Slideshow labeled “Lesson 12, Hook Game” and divide your class into teams. Challenge them to evaluate the two items displayed on the screen and determine which they believe to have appraised and determined as more valuable. Ask group members to refrain from using their cellphones.

**Q:** Which item’s value surprised you the most?

**Q:** Have you ever wondered about the value of an heirloom in your home?

Write down the names of people God has used in your life to provide for you in the past. Next to those names, write down a way in which you can “pay it forward” this month, honoring those individuals by being a provision in a similar way for someone else.
Week 12: Genesis 47:1-12

Book

Main Point: God always provides for His people, sometimes in unexpected ways.

Text Summary: Joseph presents his family before Pharaoh as shepherds. Pharaoh tells them they can live in Goshen in the best part of the land. Joseph presents his father, Jacob, before Pharaoh, and Jacob blesses Pharaoh. Joseph gives enough food for Jacob’s whole family and settles them in Goshen.

Genesis 47:1-12 [Read]

Talking Point 1: God always provides for His people.

Q: Think back to the beginning of our story all the way up to this point. How many different things did God have to orchestrate to provide for the sons of Israel?

Q: How did Joseph show trust in God to provide all along, throughout the story?

This has been a long, difficult journey for the sons of Israel. But now we see God giving them a permanent solution to their food scarcity. He is moving them to a new land where their flocks can graze and they will be near the breadbasket of Egypt. They have been given protection and provision from the pharaoh. They will be the very definition of settled.

Though it wasn’t along the main part of the Nile where the rest of Egypt was centered, Goshen was an ideal place for pasturing flocks. And actually, its location away from the locus of Egyptian culture was good for the Israelites. They were in Egypt, but in their own land. They could maintain their own culture and most importantly, their own religion, while still benefiting from the provision of the land of Egypt. And because Egyptians considered shepherds an abomination, they would leave them alone. Joseph’s family could live happily in Goshen without having to feel the pressure to conform to Egyptian culture or worship of their gods.

The text mentions twice that they were not only provided for, they were given the best part of the land (vv. 6, 11). God didn’t just provide for them – He provided the best. An abundance. “Far more abundantly than all we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20).

Consider the ways God has provided for you in the past, sometimes even doing miraculous things to do so. And yet, often when we lose our job or an unexpected situation comes up, we immediately start to worry, instead of trusting Him to provide again. We human beings have short memories. But God promises that He is our provider. He is the One who gives us our daily bread (Matt. 6:11). And He is the Bread of Life, provider of eternal life (John 6:35). God is the
giver of all good gifts and He delights in giving us what we need, what is best for us (Matt. 7:11). So, we don’t need to worry (Matt. 6:25–34). We need to remember what God has done in the past, how He has provided, and trust Him to do the same again.

Q: Read Matthew 6:25–34. What kind of things cause you to worry? When do you find yourself feeling the most anxious?

Q: What does this passage say to you about God as Provider?

Q: What does it mean to seek first the kingdom of God, as opposed to seeking “these things”?

Trusting in God to provide for us doesn’t mean we just quit our jobs and wait for God to rain down manna from heaven. We still do the responsible things to provide for ourselves. But it does mean that when life throws us curveballs, we trust that God has a plan, that He is working in all of it, and it will work out for our good. We don’t panic. We give all of our worries, anxieties, fears and concerns up to God in prayer.

Q: Read Philippians 4:6–7. How can giving worries up to God in prayer bring you peace?

Q: Describe a time you have experienced that peace that surpasses all understanding. What was it like? How did it affect your life? Your decision-making? Your fears?

Q: If you really believed that God would always provide for you, how would it change the way you lived your life, the choices you made?

Genesis 47:7-10 again [READ]

Talking Point 2: Our lives are only a sojourning.

Q: Why does Joseph present his father to Pharaoh?

Q: Why do you think Pharaoh asks Joseph’s father how old he is?

After bringing his brothers before Pharaoh to discuss their plan to live in Goshen, Joseph presented his father before Pharaoh. This was more of a relational type of meeting rather than business. As the patriarch, Jacob should be speaking for the family, but it was five of the brothers who did the official business transaction type of conversation with Pharaoh. Why? Jacob has already said he is old and ready to die (45:28). He has already passed along all of his patriarchal responsibilities to his sons. He is simply there as a formality.

This meet-and-greet was personal. This wasn’t some random group coming to Pharaoh seeking sanctuary and help. This was Pharaoh’s second-in-command presenting his beloved father to Pharaoh.iii For both Joseph and Pharaoh, this was personal. Pharaoh didn’t just see Joseph as an
employee. He trusted Joseph with his entire country and his entire household – everything. You
don’t put this kind of trust in someone with just a business partner. This is someone Pharaoh
trusted implicitly. So, it would have been natural for Pharaoh to want to meet his actual family,
particularly his father.

Also, remember, that Pharaoh respected Joseph as a man of God. When Joseph interpreted
Pharaoh’s dreams, he had said, “Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?”
(41:38). Pharaoh not only loved Joseph, he revered him. Even more importantly, he recognized
God’s Spirit in Joseph. So, he would have treated Joseph’s father with respect and interest.
Would his father also have the Spirit of God in him? Would he have the same ability to interpret
dreams, the same wisdom, the same kindness? What was his story?

So, Pharaoh asked Jacob a simple question about his life. “How many are the days of the years
of your life?” (47:8). Jacob answers with a number – “The days of the years of my sojourning
are 130 years” (47:9). But the Hebrew doesn’t really mean “how many”; it’s vaguer than that.
It’s indefinite, just “what?” or sometimes “how?”

Meaning “What are the days of the years of your life?” which could mean, “what is the number of them?” or it could mean, “What was your life like? What happened during those days? How was your life?” Jacob also answers with a
short description of that. “Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life” (v. 9).

Jacob describes his life as a life of sojourning. Genesis uses the same word for Abraham’s life as
well (17:8). It didn’t mean that they were nomadic people, moving from place to place. Jacob
had only moved from Canaan to Laban back to Canaan. He wasn’t a wanderer. What it meant
was that they had lived in land that didn’t actually belong to them (15:13). Though Canaan was
promised to Abraham, it didn’t really become their land until the time of Joshua. They were just
sojourners in the land of Canaan. Just as they would now be sojourners in the land of Egypt
(15:13).

In the time of David, the Israelites were finally no longer sojourners in the land – it was actually
their land. Yet, when David prayed to bless the offerings for the temple, before it was actually
built, he still used that term for the people of Israel, but in a different way. David said that he
and his people were sojourners, as all of their fathers were before them (1 Chron. 29:15). He is
using the term in relation to God – that the land and everything else they have is not actually
theirs, it belongs to God. He wrote, “Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no
abiding” (1 Chron. 29:15). So that all of our lives are but a sojourning on this earth.

The New Testament describes our lives this way on a theological level. We do not belong on
this earth, we are just sojourners here. We are really citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20). When we
become born again, we become citizens of God’s kingdom, even though we are still living in the
kingdoms of this earth. So, we, today, are sojourners. We live here, but we do not belong here.
The earth is not our permanent home. That’s why we don’t spend our time and energy storing up treasures on earth, but instead we store up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:20). We invest in God’s kingdom, the kingdom to which we actually belong.

Yet, that doesn’t mean we don’t love and serve the place in which we are sojourning. It doesn’t mean we sequester ourselves from the world into a holy huddle. Even though earth is not our permanent home, it is our home for now. As Jeremiah told the Exiles in Babylon, we are called to “seek the welfare 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 welfare” (Jer. 29:7). Scripture calls us to be ambassadors for the kingdom of heaven (2 Cor. 5:20). Just as an ambassador from America would be sent to Japan or the UK or Colombia, we are sent by God into the world, to shine our light, to share God’s love and peace and joy with the world.

Q: Does your life feel as if it’s only a sojourning? Why or why not?

Q: What does it mean to be a citizen of heaven? How would thinking of yourself that way change the way you live? The decisions you make? Where and how you invest your time and money?

Q: Jacob described his days as few even though he was 130 years old. Read James 4:13–17. How would thinking of our lives as just “a mist” change the way we lived? The decisions we made? Where and how we invested our time and money?

Q: Jacob describes his days as evil. Even though he had had good times, much of his life had been defined by sorrow and difficulty. What would you say to people who have lived a life like that? How can they see God’s hand in their life? How can they have hope and joy even in the midst of a difficult life?

Genesis 47:10 again [Read]

Talking Point 3: God uses His people to bless the world.

Q: Why would Jacob bless Pharaoh?

Q: How would Pharaoh have received that blessing?

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Jacob “blesses” Pharaoh both on his way into the room and on his way out – as a greeting and a farewell. This was a typical way to greet a king, a formal greeting, as Daniel did when he greeted Darius “O king, may you live forever” (Dan. 6:21). So it wasn’t the same kind of blessing as Jacob spoke over his sons. But, in this context, and with Genesis intentionally choosing to use
the word “blessing,” it also speaks to the theological truth that God will bless the whole world through Israel. Genesis is making reference to the covenant, the promise that God made to Abraham.⁵

God will bless the world through Israel, and He already has done so in this story. He has blessed Egypt greatly, and many other nations as well, through Joseph. Pharaoh is giving them wealth and food and land, but the text doesn’t refer to those things as blessings. Instead, the word blessing is only used when Jacob blesses Pharaoh. It is Jacob who blesses Pharaoh. Israel who blesses Egypt. Jacob, the humble insignificant shepherd, is blessing Pharaoh, the king of the most powerful country in the world. Jacob is insignificant in the eyes of the world, but he is the father of promise. Though Egypt may have had more materially, Israel’s blessing is even more valuable, because it’s a blessing from the Lord. Remember that Pharaoh recognized that there was something amazing about Joseph – he saw God’s Spirit in him (41:38). Even if Pharaoh didn’t wholeheartedly follow Joseph’s God and worship Him alone, he would have been happy to receive a blessing from Joseph or his father.

Do we remember this about our ability to bless others as God’s people? We may not have the riches of Pharaoh to give to the poor, but we can still bless them, in an even better way. One day, after Pentecost, when Peter and John were going into the temple, a beggar asked them for money. Peter’s responded that he didn’t have any money, but he would give him what he did have. And he healed him! (Acts 3:1–10). The guy was only asking for a few bucks, but Peter gave him so much more. He gave him the ability to walk again, the ability to get a job and support himself for the rest of his life!

Now, we may not go around healing everyone we meet, but what we do have to offer is infinitely better than a few dollars. It’s spiritual healing. By sharing the Gospel with people, we offer people a way to find eternal life with Christ! We can also bless people in physical tangible ways. We can give money to the poor, we can volunteer for charities, we can use the gifts God has given us to help others, we can offer friendships to those who are in pain ... but the greatest blessing we can give is Christ Himself.

Q: If you thought of your life as an opportunity to bless others, how would you live differently?

Q: What blessings has God given you that you can share with other people?

Q: How can you speak blessings into other people’s lives with your words?

Q: If we think of sharing the Gospel with people as a way to bless them, how might it change our fears or worries about witnessing to people?
Week 12: Genesis 47:1-12

Took

Main Point: God always provides for His people, sometimes in unexpected ways.

The slideshow in the game played at the beginning of class contained a picture of a Navajo Ute First Phase blanket that appraised for more than $500,000. In 2011, an unemployed man living in a shack on disability checks watched this episode of Antiques Roadshow and compared the blanket to one that had been passed down throughout his family. They had viewed it as worthless but upon seeing a blanket that resembled it on the television, the man brought the piece to a local auction house. An incredible sequence of events played out culminating with a $1.5-million-dollar sale of the blanket. The blanket that had been passed down through five generations turned the man’s life around.

Few of us have stories of family heirlooms that saved our lives, but we do have stories of our heavenly Father’s provision. Consider the ways that God has taken care of you, often in unexpected ways, at the exact moment of your need.

Q: How has God provided for you in the past? Materially, spiritually, emotionally, etc.?

Q: How can you use those provisions to bless others?

CHALLENGES:

THINK: My life is but a vapor – Think about how short life really is. Some days it might feel like it’s dragging on forever. Some days you might feel like you have an eternity ahead of you. But you look back on it and it feels as if what you’ve had so far has flown by. No matter where you are in the journey and no matter how many years you actually do live, compared to eternity, our lives really are just a few years of sojourning on this earth. What will you do with your “few days” that you have? What will you do with this one precious life you have been given? How will you make it count?

PRAY: Thanksgiving – Think about all of the ways that God has provided for you in your life. Not just materially, but spiritually, mentally, emotionally … giving you your abilities, your intellect, your talents, your family, putting you where you are in your community, everything. Actually write a list down if it helps you to think of them. Then thank God for each one of those things, recognizing that He is the One who provides.

ACT: Be a blessing – We have been blessed by God to be a blessing to others. There are physical ways we can bless others—giving money or time. But this week, let’s think about how
we can bless others in a spiritual way and then act on it in a practical way. Is there someone you know who needs to know that God loves them? Who needs to be encouraged spiritually? Who needs some wisdom, spiritual help, or even accountability? Maybe even who needs to hear about Jesus for the first time? We have the greatest blessing to give to others—Christ Himself. Let’s not be shy in spreading that blessing around! Let’s pour it out on the world.

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i https://ew.com/tv/antiques-roadshow-most-valuable/?slide=5545966#5545966