



HOME GROUPS

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Series: **Joseph**

Kensington Commons

Texts: Genesis 11:27-12:3, Genesis 32: 22-32.

SUMMARY:

This week we are starting our anchor series for the fall, and we will be looking at Joseph and his complicated relationship with his brothers, while paying attention to how God is present in that story and in what way the Joseph story resembles the story of Jesus himself.

However, we will not do justice to Joseph without remembering where he comes from. When the Hebrews called their God - the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, it was their way of rooting their identity in their experience of God and in their history as a people.

So, this week, we will look at the two stories that were major turning points in the lives of Abraham and Jacob, and which will shape the history of the people of Israel and be part of God's plan for redemption.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Even though our family does not define or limit our story, it is a huge part of who we are. If you feel comfortable reflect on and share briefly one or two things that were part of your experience of family and perhaps shaped you in one way or another. Alternatively, share about a person in your life who has had a shaping influence on you.
2. Read Genesis 11:27-32. There's a lot of family history compressed into 6 verses. Who are the main characters here? What experiences have shaped this family and the situation Abraham finds himself in?
3. Think back to and feel free to share about those moments in your life when you felt stuck, or tried something that did not really work out, or when you were not so sure what was next for you. (Alternatively, reflect on how the cultural messages or social markers can contribute to our sense of feeling lost.) What did you learn about yourself during that time? If you feel comfortable, share about ways God was present to you in those moments.

4. Read Genesis 12:1-3, paying attention to any repeated words or ideas. What is the tension here? What elements and layers do you identify in God's promise?¹

If you were to think about your own story, what has helped you to leave something behind and move forward to something new and trust God in it?

5. Jacob's willingness to wrestle provides the counterweight to Abraham's willingness to trust, both set the stage for the Joseph story, and both - trust and wrestling with God - are present in our stories.

Read Genesis 32:22-32. Quickly look through the vv. 6-21, noticing the emotions and actions of Jacob, briefly share your observations. In what way do you think the mysterious wrestling incident in the night is God's response to Jacob's prayer?

6. If there's time, share how have both of those - trusting God and struggling with God - been present in your life lately. How has it changed you? Where can you say with Jacob, I have seen the face of God in my wrestling?

PRAYER:

Gracious God,

If we are breathing in right now, because we need to be patient, stay and weight, would you present to us reminding us that it is holy,

If we are ready to breathe out, leave things behind and go somewhere new, and yet we are scared, would you be present to us, bringing courage, reminding us that life never stops, and we are away moving forward in some sense.

And if everything feels like a wrestle right now, and we are limping our way home today, might you remind us that even that is beautiful, because you are present in that wrestle and that struggle, that you heal and comfort, and you welcome and embrace us.

Lord, in our breathing in and our breathing out, in our wrestle and our struggle, might we be shaped more into the person you imagine us to be.

*In the strong name of the risen Christ we pray,
Amen*

¹ In the biblical world, a person's name also referred to some essential truth about their character, to who they were as a person. It was a way of talking about one's identity.

"There is no doubt that in the construction of Genesis, a major break in the narrative is intended between 11:32 and 12:1. Indeed, it is perhaps the most important structural break in the Old Testament and certainly in Genesis. It distinguishes between the history of humankind and the history of Israel, or between the history of the curse and the history of the blessing...Rather, the new history emerging from God's call in 12:1-3 is wrought by the power of God from the stuff of 11:30-32." W. Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation*.