



June 9-10, 2012
Genesis 46-50
“The Legacy We Leave”
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This study closes out the series in the book of Genesis. We read about Jacob’s death at the age of 147 in [Genesis 49](#), and the record of Joseph’s death is found in [Genesis 50](#). The simple theme of this teaching is “The life you live will be the legacy you leave.”

Before Jacob died, he gathered his sons around him for the purpose of making some final pronouncements upon their lives. In our culture, this would be the equivalent of the reading of someone’s last will and testament. The exception would be that there were no material possessions to inherit from Jacob. Instead, Jacob gave them an individual blessing or rebuke. His parting words would be both paternal and prophetic in nature. The specific pronouncement he made for each son was largely influenced by the life they had lived up to that point. In other words, their past usually defined their future, with Judah being the lone exception.

Reuben

1. It’s not too hard to imagine that Reuben felt a little puffed-up when he heard the first part of his father’s pronouncement, however, he would have been quickly deflated by the stinging rebuke that ended Jacob’s remarks.
 - a. [Genesis 49:3](#) - *“Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, the first sign of my strength, excelling in honor, excelling in power.”*
 - b. [Genesis 49:4](#) - *“Turbulent as the waters, you will no longer excel, for you went up onto your father’s bed, onto my couch and defiled it.”*
2. The statement about his “father’s bed” and “defiling it” are references to what took place in [Genesis 35:16-21](#), when Reuben slept with Bilhah, one of Jacob’s four wives (Leah was Reuben’s mother).

- a. If this wasn't bad enough, Reuben did this while his father was grieving the death his wife, Rachel.
3. This one act came to define his life, and tragically, lust would be his legacy.

Simeon And Levi

4. After the pronouncement over Reuben's life, the other brothers must have been wondering what was in store for them!
5. Simeon and Levi will be remembered for their violence and anger.
6. In [Genesis 34:1-31](#), we read about the way Simeon and Levi retaliated for the rape of their sister, Dinah.
 - a. They created a ruse in which they tricked all of the men of the town to be circumcised so they would become eligible to intermarry with the Jews.
 - b. After they had been recovering from surgery for three days, Simeon and Levi took killed all of the men with their swords!
 - c. They slaughtered all of the men in the town of Shechem, even though it was only one man who was responsible for the crime.
7. This event defined their lives, so anger was the legacy they would leave.

Joseph

8. The pattern so far seems to suggest that when you live a good life, you will leave a good legacy, but the reverse is also true; when you live a bad life, you will leave a bad legacy, which will be the way it works for each of us.
9. Joseph receives the longest pronouncement of all of the sons, and Jacob would speak blessings over his life six times.

Judah

10. The exception to the pattern of "bad life, bad legacy" and "good life, good legacy," is Judah.
11. Jacob told his sons that the Messiah would come through Judah's line!
12. The point in Judah's story is that it wasn't what he did that established his legacy!

13. [Genesis 37:12-36](#) records the account of Judah's unbelievably cruel idea to sell Joseph into slavery instead of killing him outright.
14. Judah rebelled against the Lord when he slept with a pagan Canaanite woman and fathered three sons.
 - a. Er, Judah's firstborn son was "*wicked in the sight of the Lord,*" and the Lord judged his sin by killing him!¹
 - b. The widow of one of these sons was Tamar, who thought she would be childless, so she dreamed up a plan to dress like a prostitute in order to have sex with a man for the purpose of getting pregnant.
 - c. It's in [Genesis 38](#) that we read about Judah's decision to sleep with a woman he thought to be a prostitute, only to find out some time later that he had sex with, Tamar, his own daughter-in-law!
15. Judah's life experience shows a man who didn't have much of a conscience, was sexually immoral, and spiritually bankrupt.
16. The remarkable thing is that Jacob didn't mention any of these shocking details from Judah's life in his pronouncement, because Judah's past would be overshadowed by Jesus, which is the way it works with each of us!
17. The easy guess would have been that God would have chosen the good guy in Jacob's bunch - Joseph - through whom the Messiah would come, especially since he was the one with the nearly perfect record of personal integrity, character and godliness.
18. It was God's choice to bring the Messiah, Jesus, from the line of Judah, a man who was flawed, sinful and immoral.
19. God changed Judah's legacy so that it would be more about Jesus than his sinful past.
20. [2 Corinthians 5:17](#) - "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*" (King James Version)

¹ [1 Chronicles 2:3](#) - "*The sons of Judah: Er, Onan and Shelah. These three were born to him by a Canaanite woman, the daughter of Shua. Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the Lord's sight; so the Lord put him to death.*"

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Genesis 49:1-12, 22-26](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Allow the people in your group to share their stories about people in their family or people they've known who left a less than honorable legacy.
4. Spend time talking about the stories of people who came to faith in Christ and the changes the Holy Spirit made in their lives that created a completely different legacy.
5. How would you describe the legacy you're leaving?
 - a. How have you been involved in ministry for the Lord?
 - b. How have you made a difference in the lives of others?
 - c. Have you been faithful to use your spiritual gifts to bless others in Jesus' name?
 - d. How would you describe your personal integrity, honor and godliness?
 - e. Would your immediate and extended family members, co-workers, neighbors and others be able to give testimony to the way the Lord has used you to impact their lives?
 - f. The most important question is, what does the Lord have to say about the legacy you're leaving?
6. Read and discuss [2 Corinthians 5:17](#), focusing on the changes the Holy Spirit makes in the lives of those who come to faith in Christ, and the new start available to every Believer.
7. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: determine in their heart to seek and follow the Lord so that when all is said and all is done, they will leave a godly legacy.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).