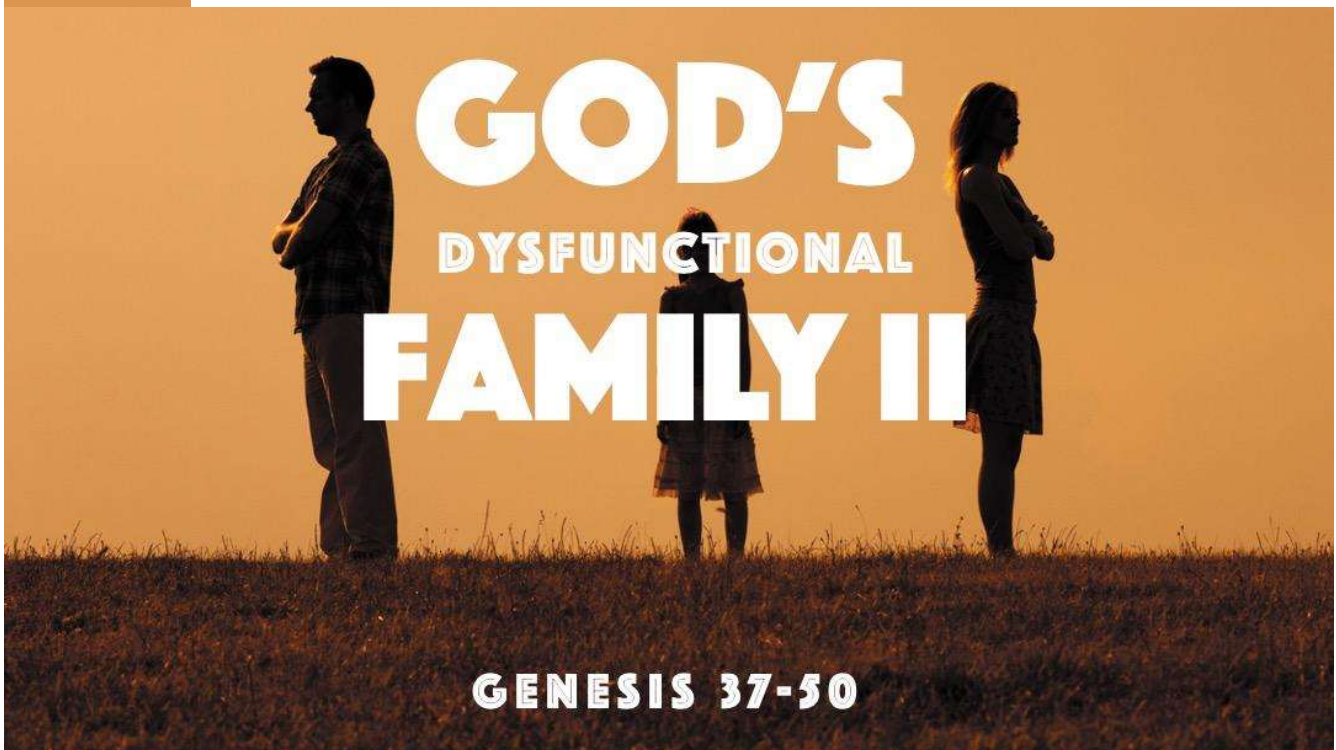
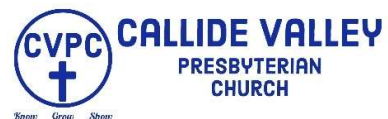


Growth
Group
Booklet



Term 4
2024



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Cultural Differences

Modern West	Ancient Near East
Ego-centric identity ("I")	Group-centric identity ("We")
Seek independence from others	Settled inter-dependence with others
Value Achievement	Value Relationships
See the parts	See the whole
Urge uniqueness	Urge conformity
Seek autonomy from groups	Seek integration into groups
Responsibility to self and fulfilling individual potential	Responsibility to others and helping the group
Group membership results from a renewable contract	Group membership results from one's inherited social and family place in society
Behaviour is governed by rights and duties specified by your own personal goals	Behaviour is dictated by the group's UGR's (unwritten ground rules) or the leader's authority
Individual worth varies by individual achievements, personal success and wealth	Individual worth is usually fixed in familial status, social position, class, or caste
Status is achieved	Status is received
Achieving and competing are motivational and normal	Achieving and competing are disruptive to the group
Assert your own rights	Submit personal rights to the group
Equality is a key value	Hierarchy is the key value
Friendships are functional and temporary	Friendships involve long-term loyalties or obligational commitments
Any group is viewed only as a collection of individuals	Any group is viewed as whole unit, inextricably interlocked
The self is separate from the physical world and other people	The self is organically connected with the physical world and other people
Any personal decision is made by the self alone, even if it is not in the group's best interests	Any personal decision is made in consultation with the group and often in obedience to its will
Private autonomy	Corporate solidarity
Strong personal identity	Strong family identity
Self-reliant achievement	Inter-dependent collaboration
Strong desire to be personally satisfied	Strong desire to be interpersonally satisfying

Adapted from John H Walton, 'The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis', Zondervan, 2001, pp.25-26.

Family Relationship Concepts – GDF I (Term 2 2024)

Relationship systems have a unique dimension. What most distinguishes relationship systems from other systems are emotional processes. These processes are driven by and organized around two forces: the need to be separate and the need to be close. We need to be separate (to be alone, to stand on our own two feet) and need to be close (to be together, to stand hand in hand). The two forces are in tension; they are anxiety producing. How can you stand alone and still embrace another? How can you be close to someone and not lose 'yourself'? How can you go in both directions? At times the tension is frightening.

How Your Church Family Works by Peter L Steinke p.10

1. "Angere"	<p>With anger and anguish, anxiety shares the same Latin root – <i>angere</i>. It is translated "to choke" or "to give pain by pushing together." Anxiety is emotional pain. It constricts and limits life. At the centre of its pain is uncertainty. Anxiety reduces clarity and objectivity. It interferes with our capacity to think creatively.</p> <p>Example: Abraham's anxiety (fear) of Pharaoh (Genesis 12). Esau's anger wanting to kill his brother (Genesis 27) Leah's anguish at not being loved (Genesis 29).</p>
2. Reacting vs Responding	<p>When we are anxious, we react before we think. Automatic processes take charge. Impulse overwhelms intention. Instinct sweeps aside imagination. Reactive behaviour closes off reflective thought. We doggedly defend our positions. Emotional reactivity limits clearly determined direction. But when we manage our own anxiety, we can respond after taking time to think and reflect.</p> <p>Example: Rachel and Leah's one-upmanship with having babies (Genesis 29-30).</p>
3. Triangulation	<p>Triangulation is a manipulation tactic where one person will not communicate directly about an issue with another person, instead using a third person to relay communication to the second, thus forming a triangle. This is a common way to manage anxiety in a relationship. When person A is at odds with person B, the most anxious of the pair introduces C (third party) to reduce anxiety between A and B. Although effective in the short time, triangulation shortcuts the healthy agony of facing our problems properly.</p> <p>Example: Sarah blaming Abraham for Hagar's attitude (Genesis 16).</p>
4. Enablement & Cutoff	<p><i>Enablement</i> occurs when a family member removes the natural consequences to the behaviour of another family member. It robs the other member of the opportunity to grow up. <i>Cutoff</i> describes people managing their unresolved emotional issues with parents, siblings, and other family members by reducing or totally cutting off emotional contact with them. Both are examples of peacefaking.</p> <p>Example: Sarah is complicit in deceiving Abimelek (Genesis 20). Jacob running away (Genesis 27).</p>
5. Overfunctioning & Underfunctioning	<p><i>Overfunctioning</i> is when someone assumes more responsibility than is reasonably theirs, doing things for others that they should do for themselves. They are often rescuers, advice-givers, "have it together", detail oriented, organised and reliable, typically</p>

	<p>viewed as being reliable workers, partners, and parents. They feel responsible for others or know what is best for them. <i>Underfunctioning</i> is when we assume less responsibility than is reasonably ours, getting others to help or do things that we really should do ourselves. They often act like victims, have problems maintaining progress on goals, and are under-employed.</p> <p>Underfunctioning 'victims' often pair with overfunctioning 'rescuers', feeding each other's need.</p> <p>Example: Isaac underfunctioning by not finding a wife for Esau (unlike Abraham who did for him, as fathers did in that culture - Genesis 28). Rebekah overfunctioning by organising Jacob to steal his brother's blessing (Genesis 27).</p>
6. Multigenerational Transmission & Sibling rivalry	<p><i>Multigenerational transmission</i> describes how patterns of behaviour are passed down from parents to following generations. We pick up in our childhood relational tools to manage our emotions and keep us 'safe'. However, these tools are not always healthy and often prove to be inadequate as adults and become obstacles to growing up as adults. Eg. lying as a child helped avoid punishment, but as an adult is a recipe for loneliness.</p> <p><i>Sibling rivalry</i> describes the ongoing conflict and tension between siblings raised in the same family.</p> <p>Example: Isaac and Rebekah repeat Abraham and Sarah's dysfunctional behaviour (Genesis 26). Sibling rivalry between Esau and Jacob, like Ishmael and Isaac, like Cain and Abel.</p>
7. Differentiation	<p>The healthy ability to stay connected in relationship to significant people yet not have our reactions and behaviour determined by them. This might also include: to steer your own course in the midst of difficult relationships, allowing Jesus to serve as our compass rather than reacting to everyone else's emotions, being a less-anxious presence in the midst of other's anxieties, taking responsibility for your own emotions (not expecting others to deal with them), knowing the difference between thinking and feeling.</p> <p>Example: Abraham at his best, negotiating well with Lot about who gets what land (Genesis 13).</p>
8. Fusion	<p>This is the opposite of differentiation. When we form an intense relationship with another and our actions depend largely on the condition of our relationship with that person at any given time. Decisions depend on what others think and whether the decision will disturb the fusion of that existing relationship. A fused person reacts rather than responds. Knowing where you end and the other person begins.</p> <p>Example: Jacob's immediate fusion with Rachel, and Rachel's fusion with the idea of a child: "Give me children or I die!" (Genesis 29-30)</p>
9. Reconciliation	<p>Action of restoring relationships, reconciling differences. The path to reconciliation is normally confession then repentance leading to forgiveness being asked for and given. Note that if someone isn't repentant, you can still forgive, but there is no reconciliation. Peacemaking, not peacefaking or peacebreaking.</p>

Example: Esau's reconciling behaviour when Jacob finally returns (Genesis 33), which reminds us of the Father in Jesus' story of the prodigal son in Luke 15.

10. Apathy and Awareness

Apathy is a lack of passion, emotion or concern for our responsibilities. It's often an attempt to cope with anxiety by denying, suppressing or escaping our emotions.
Awareness is realising, perceiving and having insight, especially of appropriate responsibilities in our relationships.

Example: Jacob's reaction to Dinah's defilement (Genesis 34).

Family Relationship Concepts – GDF II (Term 4 2024)

Four of the Ten Commandments deal with our relationship to God while the other six deal with our relationships with people. But all ten are about relationships.

- Rick Warren

There are some men and some women in whose company we are always at our best. While with them we cannot think mean thoughts or speak ungenerous words. Their mere presence is elevation, purification, sanctity. All the best stops in our nature are drawn out by their intercourse, and we find a music in our souls that was never there before.

- Henry Drummond

1. Triangulation	See #3 in GDF I.
2. Hatred	Poison isn't always something you eat or drink. Hatred can be a poison, producing bitterness that eats away at our hearts and minds. We've been told that to counter hatred we need to simply love. But hatred is a reaction to a primary emotion, which is typically fear. So, get to know what you fear. Hatred often causes us to 'dehumanise' people, seeing them as less than human. We can see this in the way the brothers conspire to murder Joseph while he's at a distance and 'faceless'. We need to remember that we all have the same God-given value. We're generally not the best or worst versions of ourselves. We might hate people's choices but we must beware the 'dehumanising' act of hatred and remember that we are all dependent on God's grace and forgiveness.
3. Avoidance	Avoidance of conflict is a form of 'peace faking' where we're more interested in avoiding unpleasant people or situations rather than resolving differences. Avoidance is a form of denial, pretending that there's no problem when there is. There are many reasons we may avoid conflict. They include 'second guessing' someone reacting badly or fearing the impact on the relationship of possible rejection, disappointment and anger. So we must learn how to manage our own emotions so we are able to engage well and resolve a conflict.
4. Healthy Belonging	All human beings 'long to belong'. God made us to be connected, firstly to him, and secondly to other people. There are plenty of unhealthy ways to seek belonging (think gangs and cults). A healthy church should be a place where each member feels like they belong as if they're part of the family. Belonging is being a part of something. Following Jesus is actually being called into doing life with others in God's family, belonging to a local church. Christianity is never meant to be an individual pursuit, but growth with others.
5. Differentiation	See #7 in GDF I on page 5.
6. Favouritism	Favouritism is giving unfair, preferential treatment to someone at the expense of another. Playing favourites is often something that spreads beyond family boundaries and causes factions in churches. Favouritism will gather like-minded people to stand in judgement over people they think lesser of. James 2:1 makes it very clear that favouritism is not part of the character of God. Showing favouritism is a distortion of showing

	favour or kindness which is a fruit of the Spirit. So, the antidote to favouritism is to show kindness to all.
7. Overfunctioning & Underfunctioning	See #5 in GDF I on page 4.
8. Reconciliation	See #9 in GDF In on page 5.
9. Trust	Trust is having confidence that someone will be there for you. If trust is about control, then Christians are challenged to increasingly hand control over to God. Trust in God depends greatly on believing that God is good and has your best interests at heart. To trust in God means believing that what he says about himself, about the world, and about you, is true. So, trusting God is more than a feeling; it's a choice to have faith in what he says, even when your feelings or circumstances would have you believe something different. Trusting God is not about ignoring your feelings or reality. It is not pretending that everything is ok when it isn't. Trusting God is living a life of belief in and obedience to God, even when life is difficult.

Visual Summary of Genesis



created by the Bible Project

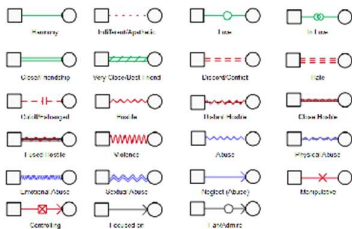
Patterns in Abraham's Family

(thanks to Rev David Thurston for sharing his work on this)

Discipline Exercise: Do a Genogram of Abraham's family to the third generation (Matthew 1:2).



Emotional Genogram Symbols



Themes	Earthquake Events
barrenness	Sending away Hagar/Ishmael
Tension between wives/concubines over getting of children	'Sacrifice' of Isaac
Tension between wife/husband over getting of children	Collusion between Rebekah/Jacob to deceive Isaac and defraud Esau
Sibling rivalry	Battle at Peniel with God
	Deception by Laban
	Selling of Joseph into slavery and deceiving Jacob
	Joseph revealed

4. The Dysfunction (facing the harm)

- a) Reflect together on the relational dysfunction we faced in Genesis, in our series from last term. What harmful behaviour did we see in the following relationships:
- Abraham and Sarah?
 - Isaac and Rebekah?
 - Jacob and Esau?
- b) Which of the 10 'family systems concepts' did you most learn from GDF 1?

5. Healthy Relationships (facing God's intended good)

- a) According to Genesis, what was the source of all harmful behaviour that flows through all our relationships?
- b) What is the relationship between 'the curse' in Genesis 3, and God's Promise to Abraham in Genesis 12?
- c) Where and when in Biblical history does this promise to 'reverse the curse' come to fulfilment, in who, and how?
- d) As we learnt in John's gospel last term, who has 'made his home' in us, so that we can now build healthy, not just harmful, relationships? Where is 'my father's house' where we build these together?

6. Prayer

- a) Praise God for His promise to Abraham to 'reverse the curse', and for honouring his promise through 'the Word become flesh'.
- b) Thank God for the forgiveness he offers us, for all the harm we have done in our relationships in the past.
- c) Ask God to help each one of us this term, to honestly face the harm we cause others in our dysfunctional relationships, and to face up to our responsibility to rebuild healthy relationships.

Episode 12: Genesis 37

Playing Favourites



Jacob playing favourites with Joseph over his brothers leads to a hateful conspiracy that will poison this family for decades, leaving us wondering how God's promise could possibly be fulfilled.

Relational Issue: Hatred

Sunday following 20 Oct

1. Reflect on the Service

Where in the Sunday service were you able to see or experience God at work (this could be in the sermon, Bible reading, songs, prayer or a conversation)?

2. Read

Read Genesis 37:1-17a, 37:17b-36. What stood out to you?

3. Drilling Down

- a) How is God obviously at work in this passage?

- b) How is God at work behind the scenes?

- c) How has the Promise to Abraham apparently progressed/regressed?

4. The Dysfunction (facing the harm)

- a) How is Jacob the initial cause of what motivated the brothers to hate Joseph so horribly?

b) This conspiracy becomes a skeleton in the closet that will affect this family for years to come. What affect do you think family secrets like this have on families?

c) Holding onto hatred can form emotional 'scar tissue' that corrodes our emotional, spiritual and even physical health. It can become part of our identity, something we hold out as one who's been wronged and therefore deserving of kindness. We can get stuck in an angry, unforgiving state that puts our bodies in a fight-or-flight mode. How might hatred affect a church family?

5. Healthy Relationships (facing God's intended good)

a) Discuss what the following passages say about hate: 1 John 3:15, 1 John 4:20, Prov 10:12, Luke 6:27-28.

b) The value instilled by parents in their children matters. Joseph knew that he was highly valued and loved by his father. Knowing this would have been a great contributor to him later not holding a grudge against his brothers. How well did your parents show you how much they loved and valued you? How well have you done this if you're a parent yourself? If you're not a parent, how well do you love the children of your friends and family?

c) A grudge is like a worn, ugly, itchy sweater you can't get rid of – because if you do, how will you stay warm? Freeing yourself from a festering grudge that's taken on a life of its own isn't easy. But the relief and lightness you'll feel are worth it. What grudges are you holding on to? Do you know the steps to forgive someone? Are you

willing to do it? Break up into pairs to appropriately share and pray for each other.

6. Prayer

- a) Praise God the Father for the value, love and forgiveness he has shown us, through His Son.
- b) Ask for the self-awareness to identify hatred in our own lives.
- c) Ask for the courage to face up and take action to forgive those who have hurt us, because of the Father's demonstrated love for us in Jesus.

b) What fear was Tamar trying to avoid?

c) What do you think would have led Judah to be so quick to condemn Tamar?

5. Healthy Relationships (facing God's intended good)

a) We can grow up thinking that avoiding the dysfunction and bad behaviour in our lives keeps us 'safe'. The opposite is true. Avoiding the fears and dysfunction only makes matters worse. How could Judah have faced his fears in a healthier manner?

b) How could Tamar have faced her fears in a healthier manner?

c) Discuss what pain and fears you may be avoiding in your own life. What steps can you take to face your fears?

6. Prayer

- a) Praise God that he loves us too much to let us get away with repeated patterns of avoiding our fears.
- b) Ask for God to help us willingly face our fears honestly, and for a growing desire to be open and honest, and not cover up.
- c) Ask Him for courage to respond to issues and situations in our past, in a God-honouring way.

scenario, what are some of the possible harmful outcomes if Joseph HAD given in to this tempting woman?

b) Instead of facing up to her failure to seduce Joseph, how does Potiphar's wife conspire, blame, hide and try to avoid taking responsibility for her behaviour?

c) What harm does her behaviour cause?

5. Healthy Relationships (facing God's intended good)

a) Joseph remains faithful in the face of initial sexual temptation, then ongoing harrassment by Potiphar's wife, and literally flees when she finally corners him. Who does Joseph say he would be sinning against, if sinning against Potiphar by sleeping with his wife? Discuss how his healthy sense of belonging shapes Joseph's response.

b) In what ways is this 'missing link' ignored in our current Australian culture, and how does this help us as Christians to fight our own sexual temptations?

c) In this chapter Joseph responds well to his persecution, rather than reacting badly. How does his behaviour in both the house and the prison remind us of Daniel's story, which we learnt about last year?

6. Prayer

- a) Praise God for weaving his good intentions throughout his established order for sexual relationships.
- b) Thank Him for the beauty of belonging to one another in appropriate relationships and for welcoming us into his church family, our community of belonging.
- c) Ask God to help us face the possible harms of giving in to our temptations, and for the resilience and vision we need to stay focussed on God's intended good for us, in Jesus.

Episode 15: Genesis 40-41

Failure, Feast and Famine



Joseph the dreamer and dream-interpreter, reveals what God is about to do, as One who will save the world.

Relational Issue: Differentiation

Sunday following 10 Nov

1. Reflect on the Service

Where in the Sunday service were you able to see or experience God at work (this could be in the sermon, Bible reading, songs, prayer or a conversation)?

2. Read

Read Genesis 40, 41:1-16, 25-57. What stood out to you?

3. Drilling Down

a) How is God obviously at work in this passage?

b) How is God at work behind the scenes?

c) How has the Promise to Abraham apparently progressed/regressed?

4. The Dysfunction (facing the harm)

- a) After being unjustly sold into slavery and imprisoned for nine years, Joseph now experiences the injustice of a further two years imprisonment because of the cupbearer's forgetfulness (see 40:14, 23, 41:9). How could the cupbearer have forgotten what Joseph did for him?

- b) How do you think Joseph felt about the way he had been so unjustly treated? How was he perhaps tempted to feel?

- c) What are the different ways we can react to being unjustly treated?

5. Healthy Relationships (facing God's intended good)

- a) In 40:15 Joseph makes an honest and clear assessment of what's happened to him. However, he doesn't seem to become bitter or angry. He seems to make the most of his situation. 'Differentiation' is the ability to stay connected in relationships - yet not have our reactions or behaviour determined by them. What differentiation have we seen in Joseph?

- b) Think about the extent of differentiation in your own life. How have you reacted when unjustly treated? How is Joseph able to be differentiated despite his circumstances?

- c) What are some things that you might do to become more differentiated, and more able to remain connected with people, especially at church - even when hurtful things happen?

6. Prayer

- a) Praise God for the incredible resilience of Joseph and the source of his resilience.
- b) Ask God to help us be better differentiated despite our circumstances.
- c) Pray for the courage to address those areas of our lives where we have avoided people, or cut off relationships, rather than try to stay connected and be reconciled.

Episode 16: Genesis 42

The Skeletons in our Closet



In their first confrontation with Joseph in many years, the brothers don't recognise the one they think is dead, and Joseph painfully contrives events so his brothers begin to face their shameful secret.

Relational Issue: Favouritism

Sunday following 17 Nov

1. Reflect on the Service

Where in the Sunday service were you able to see or experience God at work (this could be in the sermon, Bible reading, songs, prayer or a conversation)?

2. Read

Read Genesis 42:1-17, 42:18-38. What stood out to you?

3. Drilling Down

a) How is God obviously at work in this passage?

b) How is God at work behind the scenes?

c) How has the Promise to Abraham apparently progressed/regressed?

4. The Dysfunction (facing the harm)

- a) How does Jacob's favouritism continue to harm the family?

- b) In what ways do you think 'the family secret' would have corroded relationships in Jacob's family?

- c) Why does Joseph not immediately reveal himself to his brothers?

5. Healthy Relationships (facing God's intended good)

- a) Describe God's intended good when it comes to favouritism. What are some steps we can take to make sure we don't play favourites?

- b) How can we deal with our family secrets in a God-honouring way?

- c) What are the unresolved conflicts we are hiding in our lives? In pairs, discuss one conflict you are comfortable sharing. How might you resolve this?

6. Prayer

- a) Praise God for embracing the pain of reconciling us to himself.
- b) Thank God that he shows no favouritism.
- c) Ask God to help us help each other, to be reconciled with those who are estranged from us.

Episode 17: Genesis 43

Facing our Fears



In their second confrontation with Joseph, the starving brothers face up by returning and bowing down - to the Stranger who both terrifies them but is also the only one who can save them.

Relational Issue: Underfunctioning and Overfunctioning

Sunday following 24 Nov

1. Reflect on the Service

Where in the Sunday service were you able to see or experience God at work (this could be in the sermon, Bible reading, songs, prayer or a conversation)?

2. Read

Read Genesis 42:25-38, 43:1-34. What stood out to you?

3. Drilling Down

a) How is God obviously at work in this passage?

b) How is God at work behind the scenes?

c) How has the Promise to Abraham apparently progressed/regressed?

4. The Dysfunction (facing the harm)

a) 'Underfunctioning' was defined in our first ten 'Family Relationship Concepts' in GDFI. In this week's episode, we see several classic

symptoms of harmful underfunctioning by Jacob in verses 1-14.
What are some?

- b) Often we don't move out of underfunctioning and into healthy relating, until 'the pain of staying the same' becomes greater than 'the pain of change'. Consider the similar beginnings of chapters 42 and 43. How long have the family 'stayed the same', why, and how has their pain of 'staying the same' now become greater than the 'pain of changing'?

- c) In this episode both Judah and Joseph embrace some pain 'today' in the hope of healing for 'tomorrow'. How is Jacob becoming a caricature of his younger self, compared to how Judah and Joseph are maturing, as they face up to the pain in their situations?

5. Healthy Relationships (facing God's intended good)

- a) The unhealthy opposite of underfunctioning is 'overfunctioning'. In this case, overfunctioning would be Joseph rescuing his brothers in Canaan ('the land') in order to shortcut their pain. Why doesn't he rescue them, and instead just wait for them?

- b) How are Joseph's dreams, experienced many years ago when he was much younger, finally fulfilled in this episode?

- c) God's intended good often takes time to be worked out. And often the waiting is painful for those who love like God loves. How is Joseph letting them feel the consequences of their behaviour, even though it's painful both to them and to him? What apparently small details does he insist upon, to lead them to reflect on their past? And where is God calling you to 'wait' for someone you just want to rescue?

6. Prayer

- a) Praise God for his patience, and that he holds all of time in His hands.
- b) Thank God that he loves to arrange things over time, letting us feel the consequences of our decisions and neither underfunctioning or overfunctioning, but honouring us with his offer of salvation.
- c) Ask God to help us not to overfunction or underfunction in our relationships, but to learn from 'the Elusive Jesus' that we heard about last term in John's gospel.

Episode 18: Genesis 44-45

The Agony of Transformation



The brothers' confrontation with Joseph climaxes with Judah's repentance, unwittingly passing his agonising 'test'. Joseph finally reveals his identity, the brothers are tearfully reconciled, even Jacob is convinced, and God's goodness is clearly at work.

Relational Issue: Reconciliation

Sunday following 1 Dec

1. Reflect on the Service

Where in the Sunday service were you able to see or experience God at work (this could be in the sermon, Bible reading, songs, prayer or a conversation)?

2. Read

Read Genesis 44, 45. What stood out to you?

3. Drilling Down

a) How is God obviously at work in this passage?

b) How is God at work behind the scenes?

c) How has the Promise to Abraham apparently progressed/regressed?

4. The Dysfunction (facing the harm)

a) The brothers plotted to murder Joseph while he was at a distance, and they could not see his face (37:18). When we have a

falling out with someone, this is what we do. We 'deface' them, pushing them away, keeping them at a distance. It's appropriate that we keep a distance from people who are 'unsafe' or dangerous. However, most of the time, our distancing is not for good reasons. Think about all of your relationships. Confidentially, list the people in your life that you have harmfully distanced (they're usually people you've stopped or find it difficult to talk to).

- b) What were the reasons you distanced yourself from these people? Share some of the reasons in your group, without identifying anyone.

- c) It says in John 13:35 that it's the love we display towards each other that will show people around us that we're disciples of Jesus. How loving is our church family?

5. Healthy Relationships (facing God's intended good)

- a) Rather than focussing on the wrong that has been done to him, Joseph is able to draw close to his brothers. The foundation of this is his trust in God despite his circumstances. Healthy relationships are ones where we are prepared to forgive and always seek to come 'face-to-face', drawing closer and pursuing a deeper intimacy and friendship. Think of a relationship that's gone sour for you - what are some steps you may be able to take to reconcile this broken relationship?

- b) What are the Biblical steps of reconciliation, and how do these reflect God's good intentions for us in Jesus?

- c) How can we as a church family be working together to have closer relationships based on our trust in God?

6. Prayer

- a) Pray for the courage to not allow unhealthy distance in our relationships, especially in our church family.
- b) Ask the Holy Spirit to convict us to be determined about healing damaged relationships.
- c) Praise God that through trusting him and finding our identity in him, we can pursue robust and loving relationships with each other.

Episode 19: Genesis 46-48

Facing Our Ultimate Fear



After a long, difficult and eventful life, Jacob must again face his fears: dying outside the promised land but needing to trust God with his future and family.

Relational Issue: Trust

Sunday following 8 Dec

1. Reflect on the Service

Where in the Sunday service were you able to see or experience God at work (this could be in the sermon, Bible reading, songs, prayer or a conversation)?

2. Read

Read Genesis 46:1-7, 46:28-47:13 and 47:27-48:22. What stood out to you?

3. Drilling Down

a) How is God obviously at work in this passage?

b) How is God at work behind the scenes?

c) How has the Promise to Abraham apparently progressed/regressed?

4. The Dysfunction (facing the harm)

- a) Why do you think Jacob needs reassurance from the Lord? (46:3 "Do not be afraid...")

- b) When Jacob is received by Pharaoh, he says that his years "have been few and difficult." Together as a group, do a quick recap of the many dysfunctional events and harmful behaviours in Jacob's life.

- c) How was Jacob up to his old dysfunctional ways, when he blessed Joseph's children?

5. Healthy Relationships (facing God's intended good)

- a) What difficult and uncertain situations are you currently facing that might be invitations from God to trust him more?

- b) Together as group, each share personally how you have behaved dysfunctionally in your past and yet found that God has brought good out of it.

- c) Jacob facing death outside the promised land is a final test of his trust in God. Where in your life is God calling you to trust him now?

6. Prayer

- a) Praise God for his control over all times and events, and that we can trust him no matter what.
- b) Thank God for his faithfulness down through all generations, including us.
- c) Ask God for grace to face our own dysfunction, and for courage to face his intended good - even amidst our difficult relationships.

Episode 20: Genesis 49-50

The Best of Intentions



God works for good through the harm of dysfunctional relationships in Jacob's growing family, intending to bless the nations through His promised Saviour.

Sunday following 15 Dec

1. Reflect on the Service

Where in the Sunday service were you able to see or experience God at work (this could be in the sermon, Bible reading, songs, prayer or a conversation)?

2. Read

Read Genesis 4:1-12, 49:29-50:26. What stood out to you?

3. Drilling Down

- We have no study for this week as our Growth Groups are now in recess -

