#1. RACHEL'S WEEPING

Read Genesis 35:16-28. What significant moment in Jesus' life can we connect with the notes about Rachel's death and burial near Bethlehem in Ephrathah? See Matthew 2:16-23 & Jeremiah 31:15-17.

- Historical and Biblical Context:
  Rachel, lived more than 1200 years before Jeremiah the prophet, who lived more than 600 years before Jesus. Rachel's story of hardship and sorrow, including her barrenness and death in childbirth, symbolizes pain and loss for God's people in a sinful, broken world.

- Rachel's Lament in Jeremiah:
  Jeremiah uses Rachel's weeping as a powerful metaphor for the sorrow felt during Israel's exile to Babylon (Jeremiah 31:15-17).

- Matthew's Use of Rachel's Story:
  The Gospel of Matthew references Rachel's weeping not merely for sentiment but to emphasize that throughout history, despite great tragedy—whether the terrible irony of her death in childbirth, though she was barren much of her life, or Israel's exile, or the massacre of children by Herod in Bethlehem—God's plan for salvation remains unstoppable.

- Call to Hope and Action:
  Rachel's weeping inspires believers to be beacons of hope and agents of change, reminding us that God's presence is with us through the darkest times, leading us toward the light of God's love and salvation that began in Bethlehem and continues today.

#2. FAITH THAT PERSEVERES

Hebrews 11 highlights the faith of many imperfect people who trusted God's promises despite hardship, failure, and uncertainty. How does Jacob's journey—from his family's brokenness, his own idolatry and sorrow, to his obedience and perseverance—help us understand the nature of faith described in Hebrews 11? In what ways does his story encourage us to keep trusting God even when our lives feel messy or our circumstances seem hopeless?

#3. RANDOM INFORMATION

Skim through Genesis 36. What possible reason could there be for this list of Edomite and Horite names to be included in the Bible?

4. Read Genesis 37:1-2a. We often think of Genesis 37-50 simply as the "Story of Joseph," but at its core, it's the deeply human story of a fractured family struggling with pain, jealousy, and broken relationships. Joseph may seem to be the main character, but many chapters focus on others: Chapter 38 reveals Judah's personal journey of failure and redemption; Chapters 42-43 show the brothers wrestling with guilt and fear; and Chapters 46 and 49 return to Jacob, whose favoritism toward Joseph sowed division among his sons. This is not just Joseph's story—it's the story of a family torn apart by jealousy yet gradually brought back together through hardship, forgiveness, and love. Remarkably, despite the family's struggles, God is at work, using their brokenness to preserve His people and bring about healing and reconciliation, ultimately leading them safely to Egypt. This narrative invites us to see how even our deepest wounds can become pathways for restoration and hope.

5. Read Genesis 37. Who are the characters (named or implied) mentioned in this passage? What can we say about each one concerning things like character & conduct?

   Joseph –
   Jacob's sons born from Bilhah and Zilpah (verse 2) –
   Jacob –
   Ruben –
   Judah –

6. Working with kids can be a wild ride—sometimes super fun, sometimes pretty frustrating. I always remind myself of this old saying: "Boys will be boys, but be patient and boys will be men." It's especially meaningful to remember this when they act more like gorillas! But, it's true. Boys are men under construction.
   The story of Joseph teaches us this lesson. In Genesis , we don't just get to see Joseph as a grown-up man, but we have also seen glimpses of his younger years if we pay attention and read between the lines. So, let's take a minute to think about how Joseph might have learned what's right and wrong, good and bad, and what it meant to live a godly life while he was growing up. Let's take a moment and think about how Joseph's understanding of good and evil, right and wrong, and what it meant to be a godly man was shaped through his early years.
   Take note that Joseph would have been a young boy when his father, Jacob, tried to flee from Laban. Just think how scary that would have been for a young child. He also would've remembered the fearful preparations that were made by Jacob, when he thought Esau was coming to kill them all. Joseph was likely just a pre-teen when his sister Dinah was sexually molested at Shechem. He also would have been witness to the family's final rush to Bethel. How were these experiences used by God to shape Jacob in his early life to make him not just a *man* but a man of God? And, most importantly, how does Joseph, in all of this, prefigure Jesus Christ?

SESSION 11 Answer Key:

1. Rachel's weeping is a profound symbol of human pain and longing but also a rallying cry: despite senseless suffering, God's salvation is unstoppable. This truth emboldens believers to be vessels of hope and change, trusting in God's abiding presence and the unquenchable light of Christ that began in Bethlehem and sustains us now.

2. Jacob's journey shows us that faith is not about perfection or having everything together—it's about trusting God even when life is difficult, confusing, or painful. Throughout his life, Jacob faced many challenges: family conflicts, personal mistakes like idolatry, and deep sorrow. Yet, despite these struggles, he continued to seek God, obey Him, and hold onto His promises. Hebrews 11 praises people who trusted God in uncertainty and weakness, and Jacob fits this pattern well. His story encourages us by showing that faith is persistent and often grows through hardship. Even when our lives feel messy or our mistakes weigh heavily on us, God remains faithful, and He meets us in our weakness. Jacob's example reminds us that God's promises are sure, and our faith can be renewed as we choose to trust Him day by day, regardless of our circumstances.

3. Though we won't cover chapter 36 in detail:

   36:1 *"The generations of Esau"*—Though Edom would often be antagonists against Israel, God does provide a means for their salvation see Deuteronomy 23:7-8.

   36:8 "*Esau . . . Edom"*—The name Esau may mean "hairy." The name Edom means "red." The place where Esau lived came to be called Edom. The land of Edom is also called Seir. This land is southeast of the Dead Sea. Deuteronomy 2:12 says, "The Horites also lived in Seir formerly, but the people of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them and settled in their place."

   36:12 *"Amalek"*—The Amalekites were a desert people. They were the first to oppose the Israelites after they left Egypt (Exodus 17:8–16).

   36:15 *"Chiefs"*—It is interesting that almost everyone born from Abraham's line became a great person or the head of a large group of people. We see this in Ishmael's case, and now we see it in Esau's case.

4. Notes

5. **Joseph**-- is a young man (17). He is the second youngest of 12 sons. While he might come across a something of a tattle-tale, he's willingness to risk persecution from his brothers in order to tell the truth is commendable. Perhaps he shouldn't have mentioned anything about the dreams to them.

   Bilhah's and Zilpah's sons – Much like their oldest brothers, Rueben, Simeon and Levi, they too are doing things that are evil and disgraceful.

   Jacob – He seems unable not to cause trouble for himself. His favoring Rachel, has led to him favoring Joseph. This causes much strife and division and hatred in the family. (Note: the Hebrew is difficult to translate, and most translations go with "coat of many colors." In 2 Samuel 13:18, the same words are used to describe Tamar's robe and thus, whatever the meaning, this robe that Jacob made for Joseph was meant to indicate that he was to be treated like royalty. Imagine how much more that made hearing Joseph talk about his dreams sting in their ears). Had not Jacob learned about the damage of favoritism from his own experiences with Esau? Jacob also does not seem to have much handle on the actions of his other children (verse 2, and also the incidents of chapter 34). While his grief over Joseph's presumed death is understandable, he does seem to be let grief lead him into despair. This is very different from his grandfather Abraham in Genesis 22. Where is Jacob's hope in the providence of the God of Bethel? Jacob is ready to go to Sheol (the farthest place from God).

Ruben – We get a glimpse of his moral character and conduct in chapter 35. But here his desire to either save Joseph or spare his father grief (or both) seems commendable. But as the one who should be the leader of the family, he is unable to lead or to save Joseph.

Judah – It's hard to say whether he's being especially cruel by selling his own brother into slavery, or trying to save his life. (Note: the brothers initial plan was kill him and throw his body in a pit. Ruben tells them to put him in the pit and let him die of thirst or starvation.) Judah will appear in the next several chapters as both a bad example and a noble one. Ultimately, here, with all his brothers, he participates in lying to his father about what has happened to Joseph. Note the irony of Jacob being deceived by his own sons, much like he did to Isaac.

6. Evidently Joseph had a commitment to truth. He had seen the lies and scheming of his father and great uncle Laban and where all of that had led. He witnessed the fear that overtook Jacob at the Jabbok and how God turned Jacob's fear into joy and reconciliation with Joseph's uncle Esau. He saw the devastating consequences of his sister's association with the pagan Canaanites, the shame it brough upon the family, and the murderous rage of his older brothers Simeon and Levi. He witnessed the purging of the family's idols and the recommitment to the God of Abraham and Isaac. He had to bear at a young age the grief of the death of his mother. Commitment to the principles of truth, good, right, faith and honest work were deeply entrenched in Joseph's life by the time he was 17. How might these experiences have given Joseph hope in Genesis 37:36?

   Joseph's connection to Christ is very evident throughout the last part of Genesis. Just like Joseph, Jesus grew up in a sinful, broken world, and yet, his commitment to the way of God never wavered even at great cost, persecution and rejection, betrayed for a bag full of silver.