

# Pathway to Blessing

## FOUNDATIONAL ANCESTORS

**Stories that ground our faith, identity, and purpose**

Rev. Dr. N. Alexander Ruth  
Director of Disciples Men

*Foundational Ancestors* walks men through eight formative figures, from Adam's first breath to Joseph's far-reaching vision. Each lesson explores how God establishes identity, calls us to integrity, builds covenant community, wrestles us toward transformation, and positions us to bless others. Participants engage Scripture, honest discussion, and action prompts that move faith beyond the meeting room. By tracing these earliest roots of our faith, men discover bedrock truths about who they are, whose they are, and why their ordinary lives still belong in God's unfolding promise.



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# ABOUT *PATHWAY TO BLESSING*

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*Pathway to Blessing: Foundational Ancestors* is the first installment in the ***Pathway to Blessing*** series of studies. Originally written by Rev. Greg Alexander and Rev. Dr. Alex Ruth, this revision updates the format and adds action and reflection prompts for use between sessions. The series was intentionally designed for both in-person and online groups.

Modeled loosely on the ancient practice of *Lectio Divina* (“divine reading”), the lessons affirm that each participant brings a unique perspective and experience of God, and that every voice matters. They can be led with minimal preparation and materials. Participants are encouraged to use a small journal—readily available at most retailers for just a few dollars—for recording insights. Everyone will also need access to a Bible, though printed scripture passages can be provided. Facilitators will need a simple way to track time.

The studies follow the same flow whether in-person or online. For virtual gatherings, co-facilitators (or a facilitator and a tech support person) are helpful. Aim to keep groups to six or fewer participants. Online breakout groups can be pre-assigned, though it is often easiest to set them each session based on attendance.

Scheduling is flexible. While the online pilot ran weekly for eight weeks, the sessions can also be offered monthly, in two four-week segments, or adapted to fit local needs. Expect each lesson to take 60–90 minutes, depending on group discussion.

For more information about Disciples Men, or to contribute to this ministry, please scan the appropriate QR code below. Or, you can visit [discipleshomemissions.org](http://discipleshomemissions.org).



Find out what Disciples Men and Disciples Home Missions are doing.



Support the work of Disciples Men through a gift to the Men's Endowment Fund.

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# LEADER'S GUIDE

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## Welcome and Overview

Thank you for stepping forward to facilitate this men's study series! Whether you are a seasoned leader or brand-new to group ministry, this guide will give you the tools, confidence, and structure you need to walk your group through eight engaging sessions focused on biblical faith ancestors, healthy masculinity, and community impact.

## Goals of the Series

By the end of these sessions, participants will:

- Deepen their understanding of God's story through key faith ancestors.
- Reflect on their own identity, relationships, and purpose.
- Practice spiritual disciplines that nurture authentic faith.
- Take concrete "outside the walls" actions that bless the wider community.

## Anatomy of a Session

Each lesson follows a simple rhythm, but feel free to adapt the timing to your context:

Session Component	Approximate Time
Welcome and Prayer	2 - 3 minutes
Gathering Reflection	8 - 10 minutes
Scripture Reading	5 minutes
Discussion Prompts	25 - 30 minutes
Faith Practice and Responses	15 minutes
Closing Prayer	5 minutes

# LEADER'S GUIDE

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## Preparing to Lead

- Read the upcoming lesson at least twice—once devotionally, once analytically.
- Pray for your group members by name.
- Select at least 3 discussion prompts you believe will resonate.
- Gather supplies: Bibles, pens, journals, handouts, and any materials for the action prompt.
- Set the environment: arrange chairs in a circle, provide refreshments if possible.

## Guiding Discussion Prompts

Use open-ended questions. Allow silence; it often precedes deeper sharing. Affirm contributions and gently redirect if the conversation drifts.

## Introducing Faith Practices

Demonstrate the practice briefly, then invite participants to try it during the week. Follow up at the next session to celebrate progress and troubleshoot obstacles.

## Facilitating the Response Section

Explain both parts: personal reflection (journaling) and the “outside the walls” action. Encourage each man to set a specific, realistic plan (who, what, when).

## Leading the Closing Prayer

Invite participants to voice a single word or phrase of gratitude during the prayer pause. Model brevity and sincerity. End decisively so the group knows the prayer is complete.

# LEADER'S GUIDE

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## Handling Common Challenges

- **Dominating Voices:** Thank them for passion; ask others directly for input.
- **Silence:** Wait at least 6–8 seconds; rephrase the question if needed.
- **Sensitive Topics:** Reaffirm the covenant of confidentiality. Redirect to scripture and shared values.
- **Time Management:** Use a timer or appointed “time-keeper” to stay on track

## Creating an Inclusive, Safe Space

Establish a simple group covenant in your first session. Suggested ideas are: confidentiality, respectful listening, no unsolicited fixing, and equal opportunities to speak.

## Adapting for Online or Hybrid Groups

- Use breakout rooms for small-group discussion.
- Share scriptures and prompts via screen-share or chat.
- Invite quick “thumbs up” or chat responses to keep engagement high.

## Encouraging Accountability and Growth

Create a group chat, a private group on social media, a Discord group, or other method to allow participants to check in between sessions about their Faith Practice and Action Prompt.

## Leader's Quick Checklist (print or screenshot)

- Review lesson & pray for the group
- Select discussion prompts
- Prepare space/materials
- Identify time-keeper
- Ready opening & closing prayers
- Record attendance & key insights

# LESSON ONE - ADAM

## Bearing God's Image

**THEME:** Explore how being created in God's image shapes our identity and invites us into fresh beginnings throughout life.

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### Gathering Reflection

We've all experienced a "new beginning"—a first job, a move, a marriage, parenthood, or a hard reset after failure. Thinking about one of those moments, what hopes, dreams, or fears were most vivid? Take some time to jot notes, then share in small groups.



### Scripture Reading

**Genesis 1:1 - 2:3 (emphasis on Genesis 1:26-27).**

God creates humanity in the image of God.



### Discussion Prompts (Choose the most helpful prompts for your group)

- What stands out to you in this creation story?
- How does Adam's experience mirror your own seasons of life?
- What wisdom does this passage offer men today about reflecting God's image?
- In what practical ways can we remind ourselves, and one another, of our God-given identity during a stressful week?
- Adam's name comes from the Hebrew word for "earth." How might remembering our shared earthiness foster humility and solidarity with people who differ from us?



### Faith Practice

Choose one simple action this week that honors the imago Dei in yourself and others; e.g., practice five minutes of silent gratitude each morning, send an encouraging text, or mentor a younger man over coffee.

# LESSON ONE – ADAM

## Bearing God’s Image

**THEME:** Explore how being created in God’s image shapes our identity and invites us into fresh beginnings throughout life.

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### Personal Reflection

Each evening, review your day and record one moment when you consciously *reflected* God’s image (or missed the opportunity). Notice any patterns and be ready to share one insight next session.



### Action Prompt

Create a “blessing encounter” this week:

- Identify one person outside your usual circle (coworker, neighbor, or community volunteer).
- Affirm the divine image you see in them with a sincere word of encouragement or a small act of service.
- Reflect in your journal on how this simple, judgment-free interaction built connection and reduced isolation by answering the need for safe, authentic spaces that research suggests are essential for all people.



### Closing Prayer

Creator God, You formed us from the dust and breathed Your life into us. You call us to mirror Your goodness in every corner of our lives. We pause now to lift a word or phrase of gratitude for the ways You have blessed us today ...

Renew our vision, strengthen our resolve, and guide our hands and hearts as we seek to honor Your image in ourselves, in each other, and in the communities beyond these walls. We pray in the name of Jesus, the true image of the invisible God. Amen.

# LESSON TWO - NOAH

## Integrity & Leadership Amid Chaos

**THEME:** Examine what it means to live righteously and lead faithfully when the world feels broken or uncertain. Noah shows us that steady obedience can become a refuge for others.

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### Gathering Reflection

Have you ever sensed God nudging you in a clear direction? Name one thing you believe God asked you to do—and whether you followed through. Take some time to jot notes, then share in small groups.



### Scripture Reading

#### Genesis 6:5–22

God's grief over human violence, Noah's righteousness, and the call to build the ark.



### Discussion Prompts *(Choose the most helpful prompts for your group)*

- What new insight strikes you in this passage?
- Where do you see parallels between Noah's culture and today's world?
- Which of God's expectations for "living rightly" feels most urgent for you right now?
- What "ark-building" action might God be calling you to undertake for your family or community?
- What obstacles—internal or external—make obedience difficult?



### Faith Practice

Each day this week, practice a "micro-obedience." The moment you sense a nudge toward kindness, honesty, or courage, act on it within five minutes, before second-guessing sets in. Keep a brief record of what you noticed and how it felt.

# LESSON TWO – NOAH

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**THEME:** Examine what it means to live righteously and lead faithfully when the world feels broken or uncertain. Noah shows us that steady obedience can become a refuge for others.

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### Personal Reflection

Every evening, review your day. Note one instance where you **followed** a godly nudge and one where you **hesitated**. What patterns emerge about trust, fear, or priorities? Bring one key observation to the next session.



### Action Prompt

Create a Safe-Space Check-In:

- Identify one man on the fringes of your church, workplace, or neighborhood.
- Invite him for coffee and simply ask, “How are you, really?” Listen without an agenda.
- Affirm a strength you see in him and ask how you can pray or walk alongside him.



### Closing Prayer

Faithful God, You call us to walk in Your ways even when the path is unclear. Like Noah, give us courage to obey—even when obedience sets us apart. We pause to offer a word or phrase of gratitude for Your guidance and grace ...

Strengthen our resolve to live with integrity, to build refuges of hope in a world that feels adrift, and to lead others toward Your blessing.

We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

# LESSON THREE – ABRAHAM

## Faith in the Long Journey

**THEME:** God's promise to Abraham comes with a clear vocation: “*be a blessing.*” That call extends to us, encourages trust, and invites us to use our gifts for others.

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### Gathering Reflection

Think back to the **last promise you made**. Did you keep it? Why or why not? Take some time to jot notes, then share in small groups.



### Scripture Reading

#### Genesis 12:1–4

God's call and promise to Abraham



### Discussion Prompts (Choose the most helpful prompts for your group)

- What catches your imagination in God's words to Abraham?
- When have you sensed God nudging you toward an unknown future?
- In recent years, what helps you keep trusting long-term promises?
- Abraham is blessed **to bless** others. Where do you feel most gifted to bless right now?
- How might pursuing “simple obedience” today prepare you for bigger steps tomorrow?
- What obstacles (external or internal) make it hard to believe God's promises remain for you?



### Faith Practice

Each day, **name one blessing you've received** and one way you shared a blessing with someone else. Record brief notes in your journal; look for patterns before the next session.

# LESSON THREE - ABRAHAM

## Faith in the Long Journey

**THEME:** God's promise to Abraham comes with a clear vocation: "be a blessing." That call extends to us, encourages trust, and invites us to use our gifts for others.

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### Personal Reflection

Each evening, review where you noticed God at work through your gifts. Write one sentence answering: "How did I act as a living blessing today?" Bring a key insight to the next session.



### Action Prompt

Launch a "**Blessing Walk**":

- **Choose** a familiar route (neighborhood, park, workplace).
- **Pray silently** for every household or person you pass, asking how you might be a blessing.
- **Act** on one nudge; perhaps a friendly greeting, a note of appreciation to a local shop, or volunteering for a community need.
- **Mentor** a younger man by inviting him to join next time, fostering intergenerational connection and reducing isolation.

Reflect afterward: *What opened my eyes to God's larger promise for the world?*



### Closing Prayer

Faithful God of Promise, You called Abraham to leave the known and walk with You into blessing. You call us still—to trust, to follow, to bless. We pause now to offer a word or phrase of gratitude for Your faithfulness...

Strengthen our trust when the journey feels long, enlarge our vision to see how our ordinary gifts can bless others, and guide our steps so that all nations may know Your goodness. In the name of Jesus Christ, who fulfills every promise we pray. Amen.

# LESSON FOUR – LOT

## Wisdom in Conflict & Choice

**THEME:** Lot's story invites us to examine how we handle tension over resources, status, and family ties; how humble, others-centered choices can keep us on the pathway to blessing.

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### Gathering Reflection

Think of a recent conflict—at home, work, or church. What helped (or hindered) you from pursuing peace? Take some time to jot notes, then share in small groups.



### Scripture Reading

#### Genesis 13:2-12

Abraham and Lot separate; Lot chooses the lush Jordan plain



### Discussion Prompts (Choose the most helpful prompts for your group)

- What stands out about Abraham's posture in this conflict?
- How does Lot's choice reveal both wisdom and risk?
- Recall a time you compromised for the sake of peace. What did it cost or gain you?
- Where have "greener pastures" tempted you away from community or accountability?
- What practices help you discern God's path when family or friends disagree?
- Who are your trusted voices when emotions run high?



### Faith Practice

Each day, **pray the Prayer of St. Francis** ("Make me an instrument of your peace...") before your first significant conversation. Notice any shift in tone or listening. Record one insight nightly.

# LESSON FOUR – LOT

## Wisdom in Conflict & Choice

**THEME:** Lot's story invites us to examine how we handle tension over resources, status, and family ties; how humble, others-centered choices can keep us on the pathway to blessing.

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### Personal Reflection

Before bed, ask: *“Did I choose relationship over advantage today? Where did I sense God nudging me toward humility?”* Note one moment to celebrate and one you’d handle differently. Bring a key takeaway to the next session.



### Action Prompt

Start a **“Listening Bench.”**

- Place a small sign (“Need to talk? Sit with me.”) on a public bench at church, a park, or a café before the next session.
- Commit one uninterrupted hour simply to listen to anyone who sits down; no fixing, just presence.
- Afterwards, debrief with a friend: What did you learn about creating safe, judgment-free space?



### Closing Prayer

God of Peace and Wisdom, You guided Abraham and Lot to part ways without parting hearts. Teach us to value people over property, unity over pride. We pause now to speak a word or phrase of gratitude...

Plant in us the courage to choose humility, the creativity to seek win-win paths, and the faith to trust Your provision when we let others go first. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

# LESSON FIVE - ISAAC

## Legacy, Weakness, & Grace

**THEME:** Isaac's story asks: *What kind of spiritual legacy are we building, and how does God's grace shape that legacy—especially through our weaknesses?* Isaac was the first “star” fulfilling God's promise to Abraham, yet his favoritism and passivity also scarred his family.



### Gathering Reflection

Where in life do you feel most fulfilled right now, and how is God part of that sense of fulfillment?” Take some time to jot notes, then share in small groups.



### Scripture Reading

#### Genesis 25:19–26

Isaac's long wait for heirs and God's faithfulness;  
(Optional for deeper study) **Genesis 26:23–25**  
Isaac re-digs wells and receives covenant reassurance.



### Discussion Prompts (Choose the most helpful prompts for your group)

- Twenty years passed before Rebekah conceived (v.21). How does Isaac's patient prayer speak to seasons of unanswered hope?
- What family patterns (good or harmful) have you inherited, and how are you passing them on?
- Isaac preferred Esau (Gen 25:28). When have your own preferences or blind spots hurt people you love?
- Isaac built an altar after God appeared (Gen 26:25). What practices anchor you when life feels repetitive rather than dramatic?
- How can men create home and church cultures where grace, not perfection, defines masculine identity?



### Faith Practice

**Legacy Letters.** Sometime this week, write a short letter (one page) to a child, grandchild, mentee, or younger friend. Name one way you see God's grace at work in *their* life and one lesson you've learned from your own weaknesses. Seal it; pray over it daily; give or mail it before the next session

# LESSON FIVE - ISAAC

## Legacy, Weakness, & Grace

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### Personal Reflection

Each evening, ask: *“Which weakness surfaced today? Where did I sense God turning that weakness into a blessing?”* Jot a sentence about grace received and a next step for tomorrow.



### Action Prompt

Host a **“Grace & Grit Coffee Hour.”**

- Invite one younger man (18-35) and one peer to join you at a coffee shop or church fellowship hall.
- Share stories of a recent failure and how you experienced God's grace through it.
- Listen first, advise only when asked.



### Closing Prayer

Faithful God of Abraham and Isaac, You keep Your promises across generations. When our patience runs thin and our families feel fragile, remind us that Your grace is sufficient. We pause now to speak aloud a word or phrase of gratitude...

Shape our legacy through humility, transform our weaknesses into witness, and empower us to bless the next generation with courage and love. In the name of Christ, Seed of promise and Lord of grace. Amen.

# LESSON SIX – ESAU

## Letting Go of Regret

**THEME:** Esau traded what mattered most (his birthright and blessing) for a moment of satisfaction. His story helps us face our own impulsive choices, name lingering regrets, and move toward forgiveness.

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### Gathering Reflection

Share about a time you said “yes” to something that looked *too good to be true*, and later wished you hadn’t. How did that decision shape you? Take some time to jot notes, then share in small groups.



### Scripture Reading

#### **Genesis 25:29-34**

Esau sells his birth-right

(Optional for deeper study) **Genesis 27:39-45**

Esau’s secondary blessing



### Discussion Prompts (Choose the most helpful prompts for your group)

- What new insight strikes you in Esau’s choice?
- When have your desires overpowered long-term wisdom?
- What practices help mature men resist “instant-gratification” culture?
- How might Esau’s later reconciliation with Jacob (Gen 33:4) guide our own efforts to mend relationships?
- Imagine Esau decades later, what might he tell younger men about guarding what God entrusts to them?



### Faith Practice

Each day, pause before your main meal and pray: **“God, teach me to hunger for what lasts.”** Notice any impulses you surrender, and record one sentence about how that felt.

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### Personal Reflection

Each evening, finish the sentence in your journal: *“Today, I protected my birthright when I...”* or *“Today, I traded it when I...”*. Note patterns and bring one insight to the next session.



### Action Prompt

Host a **“Second-Chance Story Circle.”**

- **Invite** two friends or coworkers (ideally of different generations).
- **Share** one regret apiece and how God is helping you redeem it.
- **Listen** without judgment.
- **Pray** briefly, asking God to turn those regrets into blessings for others.

Reflect afterward: *How did honest storytelling open room for grace?*



### Closing Prayer

God of New Beginnings, You see the bargains we strike and the blessings we risk. Yet Your mercy meets us in regret and invites us home. We pause to lift a word or phrase of gratitude for Your unfailing grace...

Free us from the shackles of past mistakes. Teach us to value Your gifts above fleeting desires, and empower us to share forgiveness with those we've harmed and those who have harmed us. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who redeems every loss. Amen.

# LESSON SEVEN - JACOB

## Wrestling Toward Transformation

**THEME:** Jacob's night-long struggle at the Jabbok forces him to face his past, his fear of Esau, and ultimately God's shaping hand. His limp becomes a lifelong reminder that deep blessing often emerges through honest struggle.

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### Gathering Reflection

Recall a decision that kept you awake wrestling, perhaps with God, your conscience, or a looming conversation. What did that struggle reveal about who you are today? Take some time to jot notes, then share in small groups.



### Scripture Reading

#### **Genesis 32:22-32**

Jacob wrestles through the night  
(Optional for deeper study) **Genesis 33:1-4**  
Reconciliation with Esau



### Discussion Prompts (Choose the most helpful prompts for your group)

- What words or images in Jacob's midnight struggle resonate with your own faith journey?
- How have past mistakes "caught up" with you, as Esau caught up with Jacob?
- Jacob limps away, blessed yet wounded. How do your own scars testify to God's work?
- In what ways can wrestling with God become a gift rather than a punishment?
- What practices help older men transform fear of confrontation into courageous reconciliation?



### Faith Practice

Each night before bed, slowly pray **"I will not let You go unless You bless me"** (Gen 32:26). Spend one silent minute noticing any inner resistance or surrender and note one sentence in your journal.

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### Personal Reflection

At day's end, write: *"Tonight I am wrestling with..."* and finish the sentence. Track patterns over the week; bring one insight to the next session.



### Action Prompt

Organize a **"Limp & Lesson Walk."**

- Invite a friend or two (especially someone you need to reconnect with).
- Take a 30-minute walk; share one life "limp" (a regret, fear, or wound) and one lesson it's teaching you.
- Listen without fixing, creating the safe, judgment-free space men say they need to reduce isolation and build authentic community.
- Close with a brief prayer for each other's continued transformation.

Afterwards, jot what surprised you about vulnerability on the move.



### Closing Prayer

God who meets us in the night, we come weary from our striving and grateful for Your faithful grip. Receive now a word or phrase of gratitude from each man...

Bless the wounds that remind us we have wrestled with You and survived. Rename our fears, reshape our identities, and send us limping, yet liberated, toward reconciliation and service. In the name of Jesus, who wrestled in Gethsemane and rose to bless the world, Amen.

# LESSON EIGHT – JOSEPH

## Enduring Hardship with Vision

Joseph's life (betrayed, imprisoned, yet eventually lifted up) shows **THEME:** how a steady vision grounded in God's purpose can turn even injustice into a blessing for many.

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### Gathering Reflection

Describe a dream you've had—big or small. How might a dream be a strength or a weakness in real life? Take some time to jot notes, then share in small groups.



### Scripture Reading

#### Genesis 37:5-11

Joseph's dreams and his brothers' jealousy  
(Optional for deeper study) **Genesis 50:15-21**  
Joseph forgives and reframes the past



### Discussion Prompts (Choose the most helpful prompts for your group)

- Which detail of Joseph's dream-telling stands out to you today?
- When have your own gifts provoked misunderstanding or jealousy?
- Joseph holds on to a bigger story despite setbacks. What keeps your long-term vision alive?
- How does Joseph's final perspective, "God turned it to good" (Gen 50:20), reshape your view of past wounds?
- As we grow older, how do our choices ripple out to bless or wound future generations?
- When you think about mentoring younger men, which part of Joseph's journey feels most instructive?



### Faith Practice

**Dream Journaling.** Each morning, write a short prayer: "God, show me the bigger story You're weaving." In the evening, note one moment when you sensed a thread of that larger story, no matter how small.

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Joseph's life (betrayed, imprisoned, yet eventually lifted up) shows **THEME:** how a steady vision grounded in God's purpose can turn even injustice into a blessing for many.

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### Personal Reflection

Finish this sentence nightly: *"Today, hardship shaped my vision by..."* Bring one key insight to share at your closing gathering or future reunion.



### Action Prompt

Curate a **"Dreams & Detours Story Night."**

- **Gather** 3-5 men of different ages (include at least one under 30).
- **Share** a 3-minute story each: a dream delayed, a detour taken, and what God has done with it so far.
- **Listen** without interruption, then offer one sentence of affirmation to each speaker.

Afterward, jot down how the practice of listening to long-term vision might shape your own next step.



### Closing Prayer

God of Dreams and Detours, You gave Joseph visions that seemed impossible, and yet You wove every pit and prison into purpose. We pause now to voice a word or phrase of gratitude...

Sustain our hope when the road bends, sharpen our vision when the way is dim, and use our lives (successes and sorrows alike) to bless the world You love. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.