

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Lesson 1: Overview

QUESTIONS: Lesson 1 - "The Life of Joseph Overview"

1. Take time to read through the story of Joseph (Gen. 37-50) to get a full overview of his life and times. As you read, mark or note sections of his life, traits, problems, solutions, lessons, etc. Come up for yourself bullet points of applications you learned from Joseph's life and how the Lord could use Joseph's traits in your life.
2. List who Joseph's family was. His father, brothers, mother.
3. What sort of relationship did Joseph have with his father, Jacob? (Gen. 37.2)
4. What sort of relationship did Joseph have with his brothers? (Gen. 37.18-36)
5. What does the over all story of Joseph tell us about God's sovereignty and will? (Gen. 12.1-3; 15.12-16; 50.19-20) What did that mean for Joseph?
6. How does the story of Joseph impact your life, meaning, how does it relate in how God saved you? How would you handle similar trials that Joseph faced? Would you retain your integrity and faithfulness?

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is filled with epic stories. From the story of creation, Noah, Abraham, the Exodus, David and the Kings, the Prophets, the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles, and John's Revelation. One of those epic stories concerns the life of a shepherd boy who was a dreamer, yet would become a prince that would have a key role in God's plan to fulfill His covenant and promise to Abraham (Gen. 12, 17). This story is about Joseph. I use the term story only in that it is a narrative. But it is truly history (His-story), God's story concerning His redemptive plan in history in setting aside for Himself a people that from them a Redeemer would come to seek and save those who are lost (John 3.16-17, Gal. 2.20). Thus the story of Joseph is with purpose "to preserve many people alive" (Gen. 50.20) so that God may accomplish redemptive history (His-story) for His own glory and sake of His name.

Joseph's story is also about bearing the fruit of faithfulness and steadfastness while under trial. The Bible gives us several examples of men whose faith were tested and who remained trustworthy and steadfast in their allegiance and service to God. Abraham was faithful even when asked to sacrifice his only son to the Lord, yet God proved to be more faithful by providing a substitute (a ram) for the sacrifice. Job, after losing all his wealth, family, and livelihood remained faithful to the Lord and did not curse Him. Paul, remained faithful to his calling by Christ, knowing that He would suffer greatly and eventually become a martyr for the sake and cause of Christ. Joseph only had a dream as a young man, but despite his unprovoked suffering, his faith and resolve would prove to bear fruit of integrity that would eventually place him in a position that God would sovereignly orchestrate to "preserve" the future of the children of Israel, fulfilling those dreams, for a greater purpose who from them a Savior who would come to "take away the sins of the world" (Jn. 1.29).

How would you handle being rejected, despised, sold into slavery by your family, falsely accused of rape, sent and forgotten in prison? When would you break? When you give up on God? How long before you give up your integrity and join in with others in sin? Vance Havner tells about those who attended the Nicene Council meeting in the 4th century A.D.. Of the 318 delegates attending, fewer than 12 had not lost an eye or lost a hand or did not limp on a leg lamed by torture for their Christian faith. What and how we serve God should not depend on our circumstances, whatever we do, in whatever circumstance, both in word and deed, all should be done "in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father" (Col. 3.17).

A STORY WITH BOOKENDS

"Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan" (Gen. 37.1) - Bookends support a row of books that keep the books upright. Joseph's story is supported by bookends. On one end, his story begins with a reminder of how Joseph's father ended up in the land of Canaan where his father (Isaac, Joseph's grandfather) had sojourned. Not many think of Joseph as one of the patriarchs of Israel.

ABRAHAM (Genesis 12-25.11)

This patriarchal heritage begins with Abraham (Abram at the time) who came from the land of “Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there” (Gen. 11.31). Now, I don’t want to read too much into this, but one might assume that the Lord had already placed on the heart of Abram’s father to move from Ur to Canaan perhaps so that the Lord could begin working His purpose out in Abram and his descendants. Yet, what we see is what sometimes happen with some people of God who only go half way. Terah did not go the distance and settle for Haran. Perhaps Terah was too old or he found a better living in Haran than he assumed he would find in Canaan. Who knows why he didn’t go all the way. There is a lesson here for us to go the distance where God is leading us in life. But know this, Terah’s decision to settle in Haran did not thwart God’s plan for Abram for we read on that when Terah died, the Lord spoke to Abram and told him to continue the journey by going “forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you;...so Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him...and they (Abram, Sarai, Lot and his family) set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan” (Gen. 12.1, 4, 5b).

What was the reason for going? God told Abram that in that land, “I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing...and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen. 12.2,3b). So, Abram went and settled in the land. The Lord blessed Abram in Canaan. While he and his wife Sarai were old in years, beyond child bearing age, the Lord promised that he would have descendants and that they will be as numerous as stars in the sky. Abram believed the Lord and God reckoned it to him as righteousness because he believed in the promised blessing of one who will come to take away the sins of the world (Gen. 15.5-6). So the Lord promised him a son. This son would be named Isaac.

ISAAC (Genesis 21-35.29)

Isaac would be born to Abram (now called Abraham) at the age of 100 years old and he grew to be a great shepherd for his father Abraham (Gen. 21.1-8). When Sarai (now called Sarah) had died at the age of one hundred and twenty-seven years old (Gen. 23.1), Abraham sent his servant back to Haran under oath to find a bride for Isaac from among his relatives and not from the Canaanites. So the servant journeyed to Haran and found Rebekah (Gen. 24.15ff). Isaac and Rebekah were married (Gen. 24.67) and Isaac became the father of twins, Esau and Jacob at age sixty-two (Gen. 25.26).

JACOB (Genesis 25.19-48)

The twins were as opposite as twins can be. Esau was an earthly man, a skilled hunter and a man of the field, while Jacob was more of peaceful man, living in the tent (Gen. 25.27). Being born first, by coming out of his mother’s womb first, Esau would have the birthright and blessing to inherit all that his father Isaac would give him, but Esau despising his birthright, sold it for a bowl of stew and gave his brother Jacob his birthright (Gen. 25.31-34).

When Isaac had become old, frail and blind, Jacob deceived his father and brother Esau by pretending to be Esau and taking advantage of his father’s blindness. Jacob stole the blessing

Isaac would have given to Esau and made Jacob master over Esau and all his relatives (Gen. 27.1-37). Esau held a grudge against Jacob and being warned by Rebekah his mother, Jacob is sent away with the blessing of Isaac with the instructions to go to Rebekah's brother's family in Paddan-aram, with the instructions of not taking a wife among the Canaanite women but to marry one from Rebekah's homeland. He is sent off to live and serve in Laban's house as a shepherd. He becomes successful and prosperous and it is there that he falls in love with Rachel (Laban's daughter) but is deceived by his uncle and unknowingly marries Leah (Rachel's sister). After working out a deal with his uncle, Jacob takes on Rachel as his wife (Gen. 29). After serving out his agreement with Laban, Jacob secretly moves his family back to Canaan (Gen. 31-32.23) and along the way wrestles with the Lord (Gen. 32.24-32). Jacob is instructed by the Lord to move to Bethel and encounters the Lord once again and is given the same covenantal blessing as his grandfather Abraham. He is told how his name will be great and a company of nations will come from him and that this land is given to him and his descendants, and furthermore his name would no longer be Jacob, but Israel (Gen. 35.9-12). Jacob and Leah end up having ten sons and one daughter. Rachel having a more difficult time in conceiving is finally blessed by the Lord with two sons, Joseph and Benjamin (Gen. 35.22-26). Thus, the story of Joseph picks up from here where Jacob resides in the land where his father had sojourned, in Canaan (Gen. 37.1).

JOSEPH (Genesis 37-50)

Now, the bookend on the other side of Joseph's life comes at the end of Jacob's life. For as God promised and revealed to Abraham that there would come a time that his descendants would be strangers in a land that is not theirs. In that land they would end up as slaves and be oppressed for four hundred years while the Lord waited for the sin of the Amorites to come to its fullness (Gen. 15.16). At that time the Lord will judge Egypt whom Abraham's descendants will serve and they will be blessed and go in peace and return to the land of Canaan that was promised to Abraham and Jacob to purge it from the sin of the Amorites (Gen. 15.12-16).

All this is made possible because of Joseph's place in history. Because of Joseph and his trials, that God led him through, God "preserved many people alive" (Gen. 50.20). Unless the Lord acted through Joseph's life and ended up in Egypt to divert the result of a catastrophic famine, his immediate family would have died off, including many in Egypt and surrounding nations. Thus, the bookends of Joseph's life reveal for us how the Lord uses Joseph as His instrument to preserve the children of Israel for the greater purpose by which the Messiah through Abraham's seed would come to bring redemption and eternal life. This being Christ Jesus our Lord.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM JOSEPH'S LIFE

God gave Joseph the power to interpret dreams (Gen. 40-41). This is an enhanced gift by God that very few in history have been blessed with. Only certain individuals in the Bible were blessed with this ability, such as Daniel, Ezekiel, and John. From this, Joseph learned discernment. To be able to see with a view and apply wisdom to his decisions for the good of others. Joseph was an emotional man. He loved his family despite the betrayal done to him. He deeply loved his father and his younger brother Benjamin. When he is reunited with his brothers due to the famine, we see Joseph being deeply stirred (Gen. 43.30, 45.1-2), so much so that he

wept on several occasions. One would think that after all that he had gone through and even being given the charge of being second in command over all of Egypt, Joseph would have become bitter and hard, yet he retained a softness, forgiveness, something unusual for one who had such a hard life.

Yet few, Joseph had his weaknesses. In his younger years he did lack sensitivity and maturity in regards to the telling of his dreams. As you read the story of him telling about his dreams to his brothers and father Jacob there is a sense of pride coming from the tone of his voice. This actually hurt the relationship with his brothers which led to them plotting against him by selling him off as a slave (Gen. 37.6-11). Joseph also did not follow in the steps of his forefathers by not marrying a foreign woman. Joseph took on a foreign wife, the daughter of a priest of a false god (41.45). But in all, Joseph displayed the strengths of faithfulness and stewardship (39.6,8, 21-23) and resisted temptation when thrown at him (39.7-12).

Because of his ability to interpret dreams, Joseph, like Solomon was blessed with discernment and wisdom (Gen. 41.33-37, 47-49). Joseph with God's help develop a national plan to save the inhabitants of Egypt and surrounding nations from a famine. He wisely came up with a way to see if his brothers repented from their behavior towards him and how they treated their brother Benjamin (44.17). He looked at the world and situations from God's perspective (45.7-8) and understood God-like forgiveness (Gen. 50.17-21). Thus we see that Joseph was a man of faithfulness who resisted temptation and understood the sovereignty of God, plus was a man of forgiveness and a man of opportunity when given to him. All these are positive traits that we all could learn a great deal from and employ in our walk with the Lord all the days of our lives just as Joseph did.

THE DEATH OF JOSEPH:

At the beginning of this overview I mentioned that serving God should not depend on our circumstances, whatever we do, in whatever circumstance, both in word and deed, all should be done "in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father" (Col. 3.17). This exemplifies the life of Joseph. Joseph lived a full life and peacefully died. He had forgiven his brothers, seen God's plan for his life and was blessed by his father. He lived to see his great-great grandchildren and died at the age of one hundred and ten years old. Before he died he made the sons of Israel swear to carry his bones to the land of his fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Thus he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt (Gen. 50.22-26) until the Exodus (Heb. 11.22).

OVERVIEW OF JOSEPH'S LIFE:

A Son Loved By His Father (Gen. 37.1-11)

A Brother Rejected By His Own (Gen. 37.12-36)

A Servant Overcoming Trials (Gen. 39.1-23)

A Prince Born to Reign (Gen. 40-41)

A Ruler of Mercy and Forgiveness (Gen. 42-45)

A Provider Who Cares For His Own (Gen. 46-47)

A Son who Loved His Father and Family to the very end (Gen. 50)

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Lesson 2: God's Plan vs Man's (Genesis 37.1-36)

OVERVIEW: Joseph is hated by his brothers because their father, Jacob loved him more (37.1-4). Joseph is hated more by his brothers and even rebuked by his father when he shares his two dreams with them (vv. 5-11). Joseph is sent out by Jacob to check on his sons and they plotted to kill him, but instead opted to sell him to Ishmaelite traders on their way to Egypt (vv. 12-28). Joseph's brothers faked his death and revealed their false evidence to Jacob who greatly mourns for Joseph (vv. 29-35). Joseph is then sold by the Ishmaelite traders to Potiphar, Pharaoh's captain of the bodyguard in Egypt (v. 36).

KEY THOUGHT: The question in life is not, "does God have a plan for your life?" The question for life ought to be, "how does God fit my life into His plans?" Genesis 37.1-36 shows us that God has a plan both for Joseph and his family, including his brothers that will have implications for future generations including nations of the world. The life application then is, will we choose to cooperate with God's plan and trust in Him for the results or will we seek to destroy the plan, not knowing we are fighting against God?

I. GOD'S PLAN

A. LOOK IT UP: (Read Genesis 37.1-11)

1. What was Joseph's relationship like with his family?
2. Describe Joseph's dreams and what was his family's reaction to them, both his brothers and Jacob?
3. What do Joseph's dreams say about God's plan for His life and his family?

B. LEARN IT: Joseph faithfully served his father, even bringing back a bad report of his brothers' behavior to him, for which Jacob expressed his love by giving Joseph preferential treatment. However, his brothers envied and hated him. God, through a dream, confirmed His choice of Joseph as leader - an event that perplexes Jacob and infuriates Joseph's brothers.

1. "*A Bad Report*": (v. 2) - As Joseph was tending his father's flock as a youth with his brothers, he brings a "bad report about them" to his father. This is nothing new in view of their dealings and treatments of the Shechemites (Gen. 34), and later their treatment of Joseph and Jacob their father.
2. "*Joseph had a dream...*" (vv. 5) - Joseph's "dreams" were revelations from God (cf. 40.8; 41.16, 25, 28). All Joseph could do is share his dreams, but could not grasp the meaning and significance, neither could his brothers or father.
 - a) NOTE: *Theophany to Dreams and Visions*: This is the first time that God does not speak in the form of a theophany (Christ's visible manifestation in the Old Testament) - see (cf. 20.3; 28.12-15; 31.11, 24). Genesis 1-11, Theophany was God's dominant means of revelation. Genesis 12-35, God uses dreams and

visions, and now He uses His providence in Genesis 36-50. A Good example is this:

- (1) God speaks to Abraham and Moses in theophany.
 - (2) To prophets God speaks in dreams and visions.
 - (3) In writings, God works mostly through providence.
3. *“his father kept the saying in mind” (v.11)* - Even though Jacob “rebuked” Joseph for sharing the dreams, he took note and resented the possibility that the repetition of the dreams confirmed that what God predicted would certainly take place (cf. 41.32). A humbling prospect that the supreme ruler over the house of Israel which was symbolized by “sun and moon and the eleven stars” would be his son, Joseph, who would have authority over him.

C. LIVE IT: God’s plan doesn’t always fit with our plans. The typical patriarchal rule and authority in a family unit during Biblical days would go to the first born son. But, God shows us that He determines who will lead and guide His people and nations. Jacob should have realized this with his relationship with with brother Esau. God chose Jacob over Esau even though Esau was the first born. Even though Jonathan, Saul’s son, should have been next in line to be king over Israel, Yet God chose David, a man after His own heart to initiate the Messianic lineage. It is the faithful and righteous individuals that God chooses for leadership, but even those who are chosen may experience the jealous hatred of their brethren as was the case with Jesus, David and even Joseph.

1. Are you envious or have been jealous over someone God chose rather than you for a particular service of ministry? Were you angry with them? Were you angry with God? Perhaps forgiveness is in order so that you may become the servant the Lord desires you to be.
2. One is quoted in saying, “Divine sovereignty is not a rigid detailed blueprint that manipulates and straitjackets human behavior.”

II. MAN’S PLAN

A. LOOK IT UP: (Read Genesis 37.12-28)

1. By plotting to kill Joseph, what were Joseph’s brothers seeking to accomplish?
2. Which of the brothers set himself apart from their motives and why?
3. Why did the brothers decide not to kill Joseph and what was their new plan and its result?

B. LEARN IT: Jacob (Israel) sends Joseph out to check on the welfare of his brothers and to bring a report back to him. This visit is met with great antagonism as they plotted to kill, and thereby render Joseph’s dreams impossible to fulfill. Their plans changed when they realized it would not profit them to kill Joseph and instead decided to sell him for twenty shekels of silver to Midianite (Ishmaelite) traders on their way to Egypt.

1. *“From the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem” (v.14)* - It was not uncommon for shepherds to lead their flocks many miles from home in search of pasture lands. “Shechem” was around sixty miles north of Hebron. Jacob owned land there (33.19). Joseph finally finds his brothers seventeen miles further north in “Dothan” on the main trade route connecting Asia to Egypt through Canaan.
2. *“they plotted against him to put him to death” (v. 18)* - Joseph’s brothers seek to silence Joseph plotting to put him to death. Their plans are not just from personal hatred and jealousy (cf. Cain in Gen. 4.9), they actually wanted to alter the will of God as revealed in Joseph’s dreams. This is similar to Caiaphas in the New Testament who wanted to altar God’s plan by not only seeking to have Jesus put to death, but wanted Jesus hang on a tree (or cross) so that He would be cursed (Dt. 21.22-23; John 19.31). The Jews hatred of Jesus was actually fulfilling God’s providential plan for His Son to die, yet did not remain on the cross (a tree). Reuben was next in line to receive Jacob’s blessing as rights in being the firstborn son. The prospect that Joseph would receive Jacob’s blessing was too great, but in the end (along with Judah) did not relish killing his brother. Reuben was more interested in looking after his father’s interest, but Judah was not willing to let Joseph go free and sought to gain a profit for him.
3. *“And sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver” (v. 28)* - Midianites and Ishmaelites were one in the same people who bought Joseph from his brothers. These peoples were a mixture of Abraham’s descendants who made their living as nomadic caravan merchants (cf. 39.1; Jdg. 8.24). They were “Bedouin” nomads. Therefore, instead of being agents of death, these traders will prove to be God’s instruments of deliverance for Joseph when they take him to Egypt.

C. **LIVE IT:** Reuben was willing to let Joseph live for the sake of his father, Jacob. Judah, on the other hand was not interested in his father’s interest but his own.

1. What controls your heart and emotions that you would be willing (or have) severed relationships with others?
2. Is that relationship reconcilable? Are you willing to humble yourself and seek forgiveness before man and God?

III. A CRUEL PLAN

A. **LOOK IT UP:** (Read Genesis 37.29-35)

1. Reuben had a different plan in mind for Joseph, what was it? - (v.22)
2. How did he respond and why?
3. How similar was Joseph’s brothers deception to Jacob vs Jacob’s own deception to his father, Isaac? (Read vv. 31-33 and 27.16).

4. What does Jacob's reaction to Joseph's death reveal about his faith in God's revelations through Joseph's dreams? (vv. 5, 9-11; 33-35).

B. LEARN IT: Reuben was unaware of Judah's new plan and was gone during the sale of Joseph. His intent was to come back and rescue Joseph and return him safely to his father. Since Reuben was the oldest son, Jacob would have held him responsible for the welfare and safety of Joseph. When he saw that Joseph was gone he "*tore his garments*" knowing what his father would do and say. Now, Reuben is caught in the deceiving lies of his brothers as they try to cover one sin over another.

1. "*and dipped the tunic in the blood*" (v. 31) - The brothers actions to cover up sin is very similar to Jacob's deception with his own father Isaac when he deceived his father with the "skin of a goat" (27.16). Now his sons were deceiving him with the "blood of a goat" (v.31).
2. "*It is my son's tunic*" (vv. 33-34) - Had Jacob believed in God's revelation through Joseph's dreams, perhaps he would have inquired more about his sons well-being rather than just simply "recognized" or "examined" his sons bloodied tunic and believing that he was dead. Jacob had jump to the conclusion and bought the bait of his sons deception just as his own father believed his deception. The result of his believing Joseph was killed by a wild beast led to his mourning rather than believing God's plan for Joseph and his family.

C. LIVE IT: There are two great lessons here that we learn from Joseph's brothers and father Jacob. First, when we sin, it is better to go ahead and confess our sin before our sin finds us out or it harms others. If Reuben truly had his father's best interest at hand, he would not have gone along with his other brothers deception, but would have probably acted the way that Joseph had done before by bringing a bad report of his brother's activity. Second, believers need to completely trust in the promises of God. The problem is that sometimes we fail miserably and jump to negative conclusions before faith in God. Believers need to keep in mind what the Apostle Paul stated about love, "love hopes all things, love believes all things" (1 Cor. 13.7).

1. Has there been a time when you covered one sin up over another? Have you confess that sin to the Lord?
2. Has there been times when you jumped to conclusions for the worst instead of trusting in God for outcomes? News about a family member, your health, a financial problem?

IV. PLAN IN MOTION

A. LOOK IT UP: (Read Genesis 37.36)

1. Where and what eventually happened to Joseph?
2. Read Romans 8.26-39. How does this passage relate to Genesis 37 and Joseph's life?

B. LEARN IT: This chapter and others after this capture Joseph's experiences that demonstrate how God's ability to cause bad things to work out for good for those who love Him and are faithful to Him. The Lord can make bad situations work for the accomplishment of His purposes, and for the blessing of His people.

1. *"Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the guard"* (v. 36) - The Pharaoh referred to (v. 36) was probably Ammenemes II (1929-1895 B.C.) and the capital of Egypt at this time was Memphis. This is where Joseph was taken. The "bodyguard" captain would have been in charge of the king's executioners. They carried out the capital sentences ordered by Pharaoh.

C. LIVE IT: The Genesis account presents Joseph as a very unusual young man, possessed of a strong character and high morals to God and his superiors. He is gentle in his relations with others and shows remarkable spiritual and moral strength. Joseph is uniquely different in this way compared to his brothers who were from the same father. Either, Jacob invested more into the life of Joseph than his other sons or God uniquely shows us what it is like to be led by His presence and Spirit in ones life who not only reveres the Lord, but chooses to obey and love Him with all their being.

1. List at least for things about Joseph and his family that can help you to be a better witness for Christ today?
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____
 - d) _____
2. Ask the Lord to help you grow in these areas each day as you read, study and meditate on the life of Joseph in the coming weeks.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Lesson 3: Compromise to Correction (Genesis 38.1-30)

OVERVIEW: Judah leaves his brothers and meets a Canaanite daughter whom he takes as His wife and they have three sons (38.1-5). Judah takes Tamar as a wife for his oldest son, Er who's life is taken by the Lord because he was evil in the sight of God. Onan, Judah's second son was to fulfill his brother's obligation by taking Tamar as his wife and bear offspring for his brother. He is taken by God because he displeased the Lord by preventing her to conceive by wasting his seed on the ground. (vv. 6-10). Judah send's Tamar off to live as a widow because Shelah, his youngest son is too young (v.11). After sometime, Judah's wife passes and goes to Timnah where he is tricked by Tamar who disguises herself as a harlot and she becomes impregnated with his child (vv. 12-23). It is not until after several months that it is known that she is pregnant and is brought before Judah who orders her to be burned, but she reveals the pledged items belonging to Judah and he repents and confesses her righteous act (vv. 24-27). Tamar ends up birthing twin boys, Perez and Zerah (vv. 28-30).

KEY THOUGHT: God corrects the bad choices we make in life to fulfill His sovereign plan.

BACKGROUND: The story of Judah and Tamar seems out of place as it interrupts the story of Joseph. But remember that the story of Joseph is also about the "records of the generations of Jacob" (37.2). Even though Joseph is the major character of these records, it is a story of what happens to Jacob's family and God's continual covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12.1-3). The events of this chapter possibly spans at least 20 years, a long period of time which Joseph was lost to His family.

I. COMPROMISING CHOICES

A. LOOK IT UP: (*Read Genesis 38.1-11*)

1. In light of Abraham's instruction in finding a wife for Isaac (Gen. 24.1-4), how did Judah compromise in his own choice for a wife and for his son "Er"?
2. What seems to be the major problem in (verses 1-11)?
3. What is the driving force of Judah's decision for Tamar? (v. 11)

B. LEARN IT:

1. "*and Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite...*" (v.2) - Judah's decision to "depart" from his brothers is more than just a solo journey on his own, it had other ramifications spiritually, morally, and had future implications in God's sovereign messianic plan. Judah left his brothers to visit his friend "Hirah" an "Adullamite" (v. 1). The Adullamites were from a city located on the western foothills of Judah, about fifteen miles southwest of Jerusalem (Josh. 15.35). While there, Judah came across the daughter of Shua, a Canaanite (v.2). This becomes the first time that one of God's chosen selected a wife outside the preferred families of the patriarchs (Gen. 24.1-4;

27.46-28.2). This compromising choice of Judah results in the confusion of the seed of God's people, in that mixing with what God declared as being "condemned people" (Gen. 15.16).

- a) The "Messianic" line: The lineage of the Messiah would not have gone through Judah if it had not been for Jacob's blessing (Gen. 49). Before his death, Jacob passes over his first three sons (Reuben, Simeon and Levi) because of their sins of defilement and violence. Jacob blessed Judah as being the one, "*the scepter shall not depart*" (49.10). Even though Judah becomes the first patriarch to choose a gentile for a wife, there were two other notable marriages in the messianic line: Salmon and Rahab who bore Boaz (Matt. 1.4) and Boaz and Ruth who bore Obed, David's grandfather (Luke 3.32).
2. "*Now Judah took a wife for Er his first-born, and her name was Tamar.*" (v.6) - Judah compromises yet again by choosing a Canaanite (Tamar) to be his oldest son's wife. The Lord took "Er's" life because he was "*evil in the sight of the Lord*" (v.7). Thus, Judah interjects the ancient "Levirate" marriage custom of which was the marriage of a man to his deceased brother's wife to provide his brother with an heir. Onan's was Judah's second son. The Lord also took his life because "*what he did was displeasing in the sight of the Lord*" because "*he wasted his seed on the ground, in order not to give offspring to his brother*" (v. 9).
 3. "*I am afraid that he too may die like his brothers*" (v.11). - Judah's fear and deception is very similar to his father's except that we do not see him mourn for his son as Jacob did for Joseph (37.34-35). Outside of the fear, Judah basically blames Tamar for his son's deaths and denies her his third son as a husband and tells her it is because Shelah is not old enough to marry and tells Tamar to go back to her father's home and remain there as a widow. This was not right because Tamar had every right to children by virtue of her lawful marriages. Moreover, as a member of the chosen family, Judah should have made certain that she had another legitimate opportunity to bear children.
- C. **LIVE IT:** One of the lessons learned in this chapter is that compromising decisions are not without its problems especially when it comes to "un-equally yoked" marriages. In the New Testament we are exhorted "*do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness...*" (2 Cor. 6.14). Though we are instructed to marry within the faith, God can still choose to work through the compromising choices we make.

II. CORRUPTED CHARACTER

A. LOOK IT UP: (Read Genesis 38.12-23)

1. After Judah's wife passed away (v.12) what sin did Judah commit? (vv. 15-18)
2. How did Tamar take matters into her own hands? (vv. 13-14, 18-19)

3. What was the end result?

B. LEARN IT:

1. *“Here now, let me come in to you” (v. 16)* - The depravity of Judah is lived out in his fornication with Tamar. His sin was not adultery, because his wife had already passed. But, it wasn't long after the time of mourning was over (v. 12) before he committed sexual sin. Fornication as a Biblical definition is voluntary sexual intercourse between a man and a woman who are not married to one another. The word “fornication” in the greek is “porneia” which is where we get the word “porn.” Literally, it means “evil.” It’s application is any sexual act forbidden in the law of Moses (Leviticus 20.10-21). Jesus would even extend this to include sexual lusting (Matt. 5.28). This action sought out by Judah reveals his unrighteous heart that is only intended to please self rather than the Lord. One may say, that even though the ancient Near Eastern society condemned adultery, but permitted prostitution, does not please God’s standard of righteousness no matter what society allows or believes. Later by comparison, Joseph will have an opportunity to gratify himself when Potiphar’s wife makes sexual advances towards him. It was because of Joseph’s fear in the Lord that he repeatedly refused her and told her *“how could I do this great evil, and sin against God?” (39.9)*. How interesting that Joseph saw it as it was, “evil” and “sinful” before God, whereas, the lack of Judah’s disregard for the Lord only seeks after his own desire.

2. *“So she removed her widow’s garments and covered herself with a veil” (v.14)* - When Tamar had heard that Judah had gone to Timnah with his friend Hirah, she saw an opportunity for herself to conceive a son because Judah had not given Shelah to her as he had promised he would (v. 14b). Therefore, she removed her widow dress and disguised herself as a harlot and played the role as a common prostitute and seeks to trick Judah into having sex so that she might conceive. Once again, the art of deception with clothing has now passed on to another generation. Jacob deceived Isaac with “goat skin” (Gen. 27.16), Judah deceived Jacob with blood on Joseph’s tunic (37.31-32) and now Tamar was disguising herself as a prostitute (v.15). Though Tamar was claiming her right to collect Judah’s seed, her strategy in doing so was not commendable. One possible explanation for her deceitful plan is that she was exercising part of an ancient law where the responsibility of the “levirate” could pass on to the father of the widow’s husband (Judah), thus she was trying to acquire that to which she had a legal right to.

3. *“Let her keep them, lest we become a laughingstock...” (v. 23)* - After Judah and Tamar haggled over the price which was a young goat (which he did not have), she required a pledge from him that included his “seal” and “cord” and his “staff.” In return, he would send the goat to her later and retrieve his personal items from her. Judah had sent his friend, Hirah, back to the city gate of Timnah to give her the goat,

but she was no where to be found. In order not to look like a fool, Judah and his friend moved on (vv. 20-23).

- C. LIVE IT:** The callousness of sin can make one's heart hard. Judah showed no remorse for his losses when his son's and wife passed away. Up to this time, he has shown no remorse or repentance plotting to murder his brother Joseph, selling him into slavery, and deceiving his father. Judah was a callous hard soul and the only thing to soften it would be for God to reveal his sin to him and correct it and bring about contrition. You might ask yourself: "What is the condition of my heart?"

III. CONDEMNABLE CHARGE

A. LOOK IT UP: (Read Genesis 38. 24-26)

1. Why was Tamar brought before Judah and what was the charge?
2. What was Judah's verdict?
3. What changed Judah's mind?

B. LEARN IT:

1. *"Bring her out and let her be burned"* (v.24) - After three months (v.24), Tamar was found to be with child and was brought to Judah with the accusation that she had played the role of a harlot. Judah, not knowing that he had been with her and that she was carrying his child, ordered her to be executed by being burned (v.24). Following through with the execution of Tamar would have been devastating because it would have greatly impacted the continuation of Judah's line and the messianic lineage.
2. *"She is more righteous than I..."* (v.26) - Tamar was brought before Judah and she presented his pledge items he had given her which revealed that he was actually the father of her child. When Judah recognized these items there seems to have been genuine repentance. Judah confessed his wrong and repented, by ceasing from further sexual relationship with Tamar. This is evident because Jacob did not exclude him from receiving the special blessing, as he would later exclude Reuben, Simeon, and Levi. Because Judah humbled himself, God raised him up to be the "Chief" of the house of Israel, and blessed the children that he fathered - even though they were a result of his sin. This is in comparison to God's blessing of Solomon despite the fact that he was the fruit of the unlawful union of David and Bathsheba. This scene then, marks the transformation of Judah when he declares Tamar more righteous than himself.

- C. LIVE IT:** There is nothing more sweeter to God than the sound of genuine confession and repentance of sin from one of his children. You might be able to deceive others by dressing and looking like a child of God, but you will never fool God. What pleases God

the most is a contrite heart that genuinely and humbly comes before him repenting and seeking forgiveness.

IV. CHOSEN CHILD

A. LOOK IT UP: (Read Genesis 38.27-30)

1. What was so unusual about the birth of Tamar's children
2. How did the mid-wife determined which son was born first?
3. What were the names and meanings of her two sons?

B. LEARN IT:

1. *"What a breach you have made for yourself" (v. 29)* Tamar's twin sons were named "Perez" and "Zerah." Perez, whose names mean, "A breach" or "One who breaks through" was the first of the twins born. He later becomes the ancestor of David and the Messiah (Ruth 4.18-22; Matt. 1.3, 16). The inclusion of this story and the birth of these twins might have been recorded by Moses simply in order to emphasize God's selection of the son through whom the line of blessing would descend. The scarlet thread tied around the hand of the second born, Zerah, was more likely a detail in the story than of any significance.

- C. **LIVE IT:** The larger lesson from the story about Judah and Tamar shows the contrast between Judah's hedonistic willfulness life to Joseph's self-control life. This chapter also shows us that despite Judah's sin, God makes righteous out of the unrighteous. Judah did nothing to earn or deserve to be the chief of the tribe of Judah, the blessing was purely from the Lord as Jacob his father blessed him. So, then, it is with us, that we did nothing to save ourselves that we would receive the blessings from heaven bestowed upon us from God our Father. He, by grace lavishes on His own through His only Son, Christ Jesus our Lord, the full inherit right to become His child for those who believe on His name. To God be the Glory for the great things He has done!

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH
Lesson 4: SUCCESSFUL SERVITUDE
Genesis 39.1-23

OVERVIEW: Joseph is taken to Egypt and is sold as a slave to Potiphar, Pharaoh's Captain of the Bodyguard (39.1). Joseph becomes successful as a servant and is made overseer of Potiphar's house (vv. 2-6). Joseph's success took an unexpected turn involving Potiphar's wife's attempt to seduce Joseph (vv. 7-18). Because of Potiphar's wife's false accusation, Joseph is imprisoned, but because of God's kindness, Joseph is given charge over the prisoners because God was with him (vv. 19-23).

KEY THOUGHT: It is the Lord who causes His servants to become successful in life even in the midst of trials and suffering.

BACKGROUND: The beginning of Joseph's story started in Genesis 37. Being the beloved son of Jacob, Joseph was despised by his ten older brothers who plotted to kill him, but instead they sold him to an Ishmaelite caravan bound for Egypt who then sold him as a slave to Potiphar, Pharaoh's captain of the bodyguard.

I. SUCCESSFUL SERVITUDE BEGINS WITH THE LORD?

A. LOOK IT UP: (*Read Genesis 39.1-6*)

1. Where was Joseph taken to and who bought him as a slave?
2. As a slave, what was the source of Joseph's success?
3. What was Joseph's responsibility and how did Potiphar benefit from Joseph's relationship with the Lord?

B. LEARN IT:

1. "*Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt...*" (v.1) - Joseph finds himself employed as a slave with Potiphar, a high-ranking official of Pharaoh. Remember, Joseph was bought by Ishmaelites (Midianites [Gen. 37.28, 36]) who were descendants of Ishmael (Abraham's first born son by Sarah's hand maiden).
2. "*And the Lord was with Joseph and he became successful*" (v.2) - This phrase, "the Lord was with Joseph" occurs four times in this chapter (vv. 2, 3, 21, and 23). Even though Joseph was sold as a slave to Potiphar by the Ishmaelites (v.1), Joseph was successful in serving Potiphar in his home. The reason and source for Joseph's success is clearly from the Lord Himself. The variants of the expression "the Lord was with..." indicates success, prosperity or victory. Because of the Lord, Joseph found victory in being in the home of Potiphar, and because he was not a field hand, but a house hand in Potiphar's household. The divine name "Lord" (Yahweh), appears seven times in this chapter (vv. 2, 3 [twice], v.5 [twice], and 21 and 23. The name of the Lord, "Yahweh" is the name for God in this story who is the covenant-

keeping God of the patriarchs. Joseph, being Jacob's son would have heard the oral stories and promises from his father concerning God's plan for this family (Gen. 12.1-3), especially Genesis 15.13 and 17.1-8.

3. *"So Joseph found favor in his (Potiphar) sight..." (v. 4)* - Joseph was a house hand and Potiphar would have had close up knowledge of Joseph's ability and thus he proved to be faithful in his sight. Because Joseph was faithful in little, the Lord placed him in charge of much. Potiphar took note that the Lord was with Joseph and made him overseer over his house and all that he owned (v.6). What is interesting concerning Joseph's success is that Potiphar benefited in that "the Lord blessed" his house "on account of Joseph" (v.5). The integrity of Joseph and his ability to handle all of Potiphar's affairs and finances allowed Potiphar to worry about nothing other than the food that was put before him.

C. LIVE IT: When we use the word "success" today, it has the expression of someone who is on top of the ladder in the business world or is a victorious champion as in a professional athlete. But, success in the Lord and the victories that come along with it denotes something more tangible in our walk as a Christian. The success of the believer or any servant of God is to walk faithfully and obediently with Him so that when we proved to be faithful with a few things, He will place us in charge of much. As was the case in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25.14-30). The one who was faithful over a little was placed over much (Matt. 25.21). The source of our success is not from our own doing, but from the Lord who works in us. Our boasting as Paul would say, is not to boast about anything we ourselves have done, but Christ working in us, "therefore, as it is written: 'Let Him boast in the Lord'" (1 Cor. 1.31) for that is where the source of our success in the Christian faith lies. NOTE: One interesting side affect of a successful servant of God is the blessing others receive on account of our faithfulness to the Lord and His work in our lives.

II. SUCCESSFUL SERVITUDE CONTINUES WITH INTEGRITY.

A. LOOK IT UP: (Read Genesis 39.7-20)

1. What temptation did Joseph face in his employment under Potiphar?
2. How did Joseph respond to this temptation?
3. What was Potiphar's wife reaction and what did she accuse Joseph in doing?
4. What was Potiphar's reaction and decisive action?

B. LEARN IT:

1. *"...his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph..." (v. 7)* - Verse 6 tells us that *"Joseph was handsome in form and appearance."* This is not surprising in that Joseph was a fine specimen of a young man in his twenties because of what we know about his mother, Rachel (cf. 29.17). This was a no win for Joseph in that he had to

obey her, but as a trustworthy and moral servant of Potiphar he had to refuse her. Unless we are not clear here, the command to “lie with me” meant she wanted to have sexual intercourse with Joseph.

2. “...*How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God.*” (v.9) - Joseph reminded Potiphar’s wife of the boundaries he had charge over (v. 8) given to him by his master (Potiphar). She was not on that list, if anything, nothing was held back from “except you” (v. 9). Therefore, Joseph’s conclusion is that this matter was considered “evil” and “sin” before the Lord. The Apostle Paul exhorts young Timothy “*Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart*” (2 Tim. 2.22). Joseph could have been obedient to Potiphar’s wife and possibly not be sent to prison, but we saw what happen to Judah when he had sexual relations with Tamar (Gen. 38.16, 25,26). Joseph had more integrity than his half brother and from a pure heart consider this matter evil and sin before God.
3. “*Now it came about when his master heard the words of his wife...that his anger burned*” (v. 19) - One day Joseph went into the house again and Potiphar’s wife tempted him once more by catching him by his tunic (v.11). The typical male clothing during Joseph’s time consisted of mid-calf-length shorts and a tunic that resembled a long T-shirt (cf. 3.21; 37.3). When Joseph fled away from her, he left his garment in her hand, by which she used to frame Joseph by screaming that Joseph attempted to rape her. After telling her household, she eventually reports this to her husband who if anything felt betrayed by Joseph so much so that his anger towards him “burned” and “put him into the jail, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined” (v.20). This is a considerably light punishment considering the crime charged against him. It could be that Joseph’s integrity had somewhat impressed Potiphar, but he himself, possibly had questions about his wife’s chastity (cf. Ps. 105.18).
4. NOTE: The picture of Joseph’s slavery in Potiphar’s house prefigures Israel’s Egyptian bondage.

C. **LIVE IT:** 1 Corinthians 10.13 tells us that “*No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.*” Is this you? It was certainly of Joseph. What’s important about this part of the story is not where Joseph ended up (jail), but clinging on to his integrity in the Lord. It doesn’t matter what conclusion people make because of what others say. What is more important is that you know you did not give in to temptation and the Lord will help you to endure the outcome. Do you live to please others only, or live that you might please the One who really matters and retain your honor that glorifies the Lord.

III. SUCCESSFUL SERVITUDE IS SWEETER BECAUSE OF GOD'S KIND PRESENCE.

A. LOOK IT UP: (Read Genesis 39.21-23)

1. Though Joseph was framed and sent to jail, how was the Lord working in his life?
2. What kind of success did Joseph have in jail?
3. What was the source of Joseph's success in jail?

B. LEARN IT:

1. *"But the Lord was with Joseph..."* (v. 21) - God was still with Joseph because his character had not changed. Just like he had with Potiphar, Joseph experienced the same kind of favor at the hand of the "chief jailer." Part of God's ongoing presence with Joseph was in "extending kindness to him." Like Daniel during the exile, Joseph suffered for doing what was right, but God turned the evil into a blessing. This theme will return later (50.20) when Joseph will comfort his brothers by stating that God intended all this for good, even though they meant to harm him.
2. *"And whatever he did, the Lord made to prosper"* (v. 23) - The Lord honored Joseph as one who had honored Him (1 Sam. 2.30). It is so easy for us to depart from the Lord when things do not go right and we are all alone. Joseph had every reason to fail. From being despised and hated by his brothers, sold into slavery, wrongly accused of rape and now is in jail. It is also much more easier to fail in our walk with the Lord especially when we see no hope of escaping from the trials we face. Yet, Joseph honored the Lord with his faithfulness, thus, the Lord made him to prosper.

- C. **LIVE IT:** There are only so many things we can control. The one thing we can not control is what people do or say to us. Nicolas Ellen, a member with the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors teaches that people who come in for counseling are lacking peace. They lack peace because they cannot control the outcome of their situations. We can only control our own thoughts, emotions, desires, words, and actions (Rom. 12.2-3; Prov. 16.32; Ps. 37.4; Eph. 4.19, 22-24). Therefore, he says, "we need to evaluate and take responsibility for how we are responding to people and the outcome of situations" (Gal. 6.7-8, 5.16-25). We need to evaluate what is motivating us with people and the outcome of situations (Jms. 1.13-14, 3.13-16, 4.1-13). He asks, "Are we motivated by love for God above our selfish desires? Or, are we motivated by our selfish desires above love for God (1 Jn. 2.15-16; Jms 3.16, 4,4). I believe we would all concur that Joseph was motivated by his love for God above his selfish desires. Did Joseph want to be a slave or be in prison? Probably not, but because of his love and integrity in the Lord, and knowing that God's kindness was with him, Joseph exercised self-control in the dire situations he experienced and could not control. This is a great lesson for us all who call ourselves servants of the Lord.

IV. CONCLUSION: Here is a good homework assignment for you in regards to how Joseph handled the things he could not control in his life.

A. What do you want and how are you responding? For instance:

1. I want _____ from _____.
2. However, I ended up getting _____ from _____ these things.
3. As a result I tend to react negatively:
 - a) By thoughts, I think things such as:
 - b) By feelings, I feel things such as:
 - c) In my conversation, I say things such as:
 - d) In my actions, I tend to behave and live like:
 - e) In my relational patterns towards _____, I _____.
4. If I were to look at this from God's perspective, He would probably view my reaction as _____.

The Apostle Paul sheds light on this when he writes: *“For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men...to this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all thing, even until now. I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children...Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.” - 1 Cor. 4.9-16*

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH
Lesson 5: GIVING GOD CREDIT
Genesis 40-41

OVERVIEW: God rewards Joseph’s faithfulness with the ability to interpret dreams (40.1-23) and with wisdom which promotes Joseph from prison to being second in power only to Pharaoh in Egypt (41.1-57).

KEY THOUGHT: God sovereignly works in and through our lives. God is omniscient (all-knowing) because He is sovereignly in control of all things. Romans 11.33 reminds us that His judgements are unsearchable and His ways are unfathomable. Many Christians fail to remember this, but not Joseph. When facing Pharaoh, Joseph could have taken credit concerning his ability to interpret dreams, but instead, he gives all credit to the Lord. Joseph was wise to tell Pharaoh that “I can not interpret dreams, but God can.” The Apostle Paul reminds us that it is more admirable for us to boast about our weakness, so that the power of Christ may dwell in us (2 Cor. 12.9). Because of Joseph’s faithfulness, the Lord promotes Him from the slums of prison to prestige power in Egypt.

BACKGROUND: Joseph is falsely accused of sexual harassment. He is placed in prison by his master, Potiphar. In the midst of this unfortunate circumstance, the Lord extends kindness to Joseph and is with him and gives him favor in the eyes of the jailer who places Joseph in charge over all the prisoners (38.19-23).

I. GOD’S DREAMS

A. LOOK IT UP: (*Read Genesis 40.1-41.8*)

1. Briefly summarize chapter 40 by noting the players, the problem, resolve, and outcome.
2. Who do the interpretation of dreams belong to?
3. Briefly describe Pharaoh’s dream, how he felt and his dilemma (41.1-8).

B. LEARN IT:

1. “*And Pharaoh was furious with his two officials*” - (v.2) - The two officials of Pharaoh in the narrative are his “cupbearer” and the “baker.” They were primarily responsible for Pharaoh’s drink and food (vv. 1-4). This was a similar position Nehemiah occupied much later in Israel’s history as the cupbearer in the Persian court (cf. Neh. 1.11-2.8). We are not told why Pharaoh was “furious” at them. Perhaps one of them tried to poison him and Pharaoh could not determine immediately who was responsible.
2. “*So he put them in confinement...*” (v.2) - The place of confinement was the state prison, which was a round, wall-enclosed building, probably attached to Potiphar’s house (being that he was the captain of the bodyguard and over the chief jailer - cf.

- 39.21-23). “The captain of the bodyguard” (Potiphar) placed Joseph in charge of these two men “and he took care of them” (v. 3).
3. “...both had a dream the same night...” (v. 5) - The dreams of the cupbearer and the baker were revelations from God. Joseph knowing God gave him the ability to interpret dreams invited them to relate their dreams to him. Before interpreting the dreams, Joseph is careful to give credit to the Lord first for this gift. Daniel also had this same gift and gave credit to the Lord also (cf. Dan. 2.28).
 4. “And he restored the chief cupbearer to his office...but he hanged the chief baker...” (vv. 21,22) - Joseph had interpreted that the cupbearer would be restored to his original position with Pharaoh, but the baker would not simply suffer execution, but his corpse would be impaled, publicly exposed and made available for the birds to feast on. Josephus called this “crucifixion.” This impaling was an early form of what would become the Roman crucifixion. The Egyptians did this to prevent one’s spirit from resting in the afterlife.
 5. “Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you...” (v. 14) - The significance of this is that God gave Joseph the ability to interpret dreams. The use of this gift paved the way for Pharaoh’s calling for Joseph, two years later, to interpret his two dreams. The cupbearer would later remember to mention Joseph to Pharaoh.
 6. “Then Pharaoh awoke, and behold it was a dream” - (41. 7) - Pharaoh had two dreams. One about cows and one about ears of grain. When Pharaoh attempted to relate his dreams to his magicians and wise men, they could not interpret them. The “magicians” were men of priestly caste who occupied themselves with the sacred arts and sciences of the Egyptians, the hieroglyphic writings, astrology, the interpretation of dreams, the foretelling of events, magic and conjuring, and who were regarded as the possessors of secret arts and the wise men of the nation. God blocked their practice of “divination” which tries to understand the future and their practice of “magic” which seeks to control it. God prevented them to understand the dreams even though the meaning of Pharaoh’s dreams lay in the hands of the religious symbols of Egypt. The “cow” was the symbol of Isis, the goddess of the all-sustaining earth. In their hieroglyphics it represents the earth, agriculture, and food; and the Nile, by its overflowing, was the source of fertility of the land. These symbols had multiple meanings which probably accounts for the difficulty of the interpretation. It should also be noted that seven year famines were a familiar feature in the life of ancient Near East.

C. LIVE IT: The dreams that Joseph, the two officials and Pharaoh had, belonged to God. Because they belonged to the Lord, only He had the right to give the interpretation to Joseph to fulfill His purpose in him. Too many Christian leaders have fallen because they forgot the truth that Joseph remembered. How often we take credit and boast about our abilities, rather than remembering it is God who deserves the credit and glory. That is why no one can boast about their salvation (Eph. 2.8-9) or anything we have achieved in life. Paul reminds us this truth when he writes, “and whatever you do in word or deed, do

all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father” (Col. 3.17).

II. GOD’S PLAN

A. LOOK IT UP: *(Read Genesis 41.9-49)*

1. What was Joseph’s response to Pharaoh about interpreting dreams? (41.14-16)
2. Briefly describe Joseph’s interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream and his advice to Pharaoh. (41.25-36)
3. What were three things Joseph revealed to Pharaoh about God concerning His dreams? (see vv. 25, 28, 32).
4. What was Pharaoh’s assessment of Joseph and how did he reward Joseph? (41.38-49) List all the things Pharaoh gave to Joseph.

B. LEARN IT:

1. *“Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph...” (v. 14)* - The cupbearer remembered Joseph and related his story to Pharaoh how this Hebrew youth interpreted his and the baker’s dreams correctly. Pharaoh then calls for Joseph, who had to be cleaned up, shaved and given a change of clothes to be presentable before Pharaoh. We do not know how long Joseph was in prison, but we do know that Joseph was 17 when sold into slavery and 30 when he stood before Pharaoh (37.2; 41.46).
2. *“Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, ‘It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer” (v. 16)* - Joseph carefully gave God the glory for his interpretative gift in his response to Pharaoh. For Joseph, it was more important to guard God’s honor than to promote his own personal advantages. Joseph, certainly wanted out of prison, knowing he had done nothing wrong to have deserved being there (40.15). So, Joseph would have had motive to make an impression on Pharaoh, but instead, he gives God credit concerning His plans for Pharaoh and Egypt. Humility is an signature trait among God’s faithful servants.
3. *“... ‘God has told Pharaoh what He is about to do” (Vv.25)* - Joseph not only gives God credit, but presents God as sovereign over Pharaoh. The Egyptians regarded Pharaoh as a divine manifestation in human form. By accepting Joseph’s interpretation of his dreams, Pharaoh chose to humble himself under Joseph’s God. God rewarded this humility by preserving the land of Egypt in the coming famine.

NOTE: It is the intention of prophecies (dreams in this case) concerning judgments that are to come to excite and alert those threatened to take the proper measures to avoid them. As was in the case of Israel and Judah before their exiles into captivity.

4. *“And now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt...”* (v. 33) - Pharaoh recognizes Joseph as one with unique abilities and wisdom (v.38). Though, he may not have identified the “divine spirit” in Joseph as being the Holy Spirit. We have no knowledge that Pharaoh understood or believed in the God of Israel. He probably believed some deity resided in himself and Joseph.
5. *“See I have set you over all the land of Egypt”* (v. 41) - Because Pharaoh sensed some form of deity residing in Joseph, invites Joseph into his court of leadership and gives him his ring, clothes him with the proper clothing of leadership, and places the gold necklace around his neck, had him ride in his second chariot as people bowed before him and set him over all the land of Egypt (vv. 41-43). This unusual expression of humility and generosity displayed by Pharaoh was not common among Egyptian kings. He not only sets Joseph second in command over all the land of Egypt, but he also naturalizes him by giving him an Egyptian name: “Zaphenathpaneah” (v.45) which probably means “The God Speaks and Lives.” Joseph was also given an Egyptian wife, “Asenath,” the daughter of a priest from “On” which was located 10 miles northeast of modern Cairo. After this, Joseph goes to work storing food during the seven good years that God had promised (vv. 47-49). This marriage to an Egyptian was ordered by Pharaoh and God permitted it. Patriarchs generally avoided marrying Canaanites because of God’s curse on Canaan (9.25). But a marriage to a non-Canaanite Gentile was less serious. Joseph’s wife and in-laws did not turn him away from his faith in Yahweh, or his high regard for God’s promises to his forefathers.

C. LIVE IT: There is no telling how God will use our painful experiences in life to equip us for significant opportunities to serve Him in the future. Our time and plans are in God’s hands because those plans belong to God. Listen to the Psalmist who writes, *“Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders which You have done, And Your thoughts towards us; There is none to compare with You”* (Ps. 40.5). For only, God knows the plans He has for us (Jer. 29.11).

III. GOD’S GRACE

A. LOOK IT UP: (Read Genesis 41.50-57)

1. What were the names and meanings of Joseph’s sons?
2. How was Joseph’s interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream confirmed in verses 53-57?

B. LEARN IT:

1. *“And Joseph named the first-born Manasseh...”* (v. 51) - Pharaoh had given to Joseph “Asenath” as a wife. Before the famine came (v. 50), she bore Joseph two sons: “Manasseh” and “Ephraim.” The notation of the two sons are very significant here in view of God’s purposes concerning Abraham’s family (vv. 50-52). Just as Judah’s son, Perez would play a significant role in the lineage of the Messiah, Joseph’s two sons will play a key role in the division of the land of Israel in Canaan.

Through his sons, Joseph acknowledges God's goodness to him in the naming of both his sons: "Manasseh - God has made me forget all my trouble" and "Ephraim - God has made me fruitful."

NOTE: Some have pointed out why Joseph did not take this opportunity to reach out to Jacob. Some say because Joseph felt he was framed by his own father because of the dreams he shared with Jacob and his brothers. This can not be, because we know that Jacob loved and mourned over the assumed loss of his son. One reason that Joseph did not reach out to Jacob at this time is because Joseph realized that God would fulfill the rest of His promises contained in His dreams and concluded this would be the best course of action to let God take care of the initiative, since he had done so consistently in his life to that time. Joseph trusted in the Lord. Thus, in this sense, Joseph "forgotten" his "father's household" as well, not just his "troubles" there.

2. *"Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do" (v.55b)* - The end of this chapter shows us the fulfillment of not only the seven good years, but the beginning and severity of the drought which was spreading over all the face of the earth. It was at this time that *"Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians...and the people of all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph..." (vv. 56-57)*. This, then would set up God sending his brothers to Joseph to fulfill not only the interpretation of the famine, but Joseph's dream too.

C. LIVE IT: The big picture before us is that God controls the fortunes of nations to protect and provide for His covenant people (Israel). This is God's grace. This grace is extended to gentiles out of God's kindness and mercy when He sent His only Son into the world that whosoever believes in Him may not perish, but have everlasting life (Jn. 3.16).

CONCLUSION: This is God's dream, plan, and grace. This is what God gets the credit for. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH
Lesson 6: “DO THIS AND LIVE”
Genesis 42.1-38

OVERVIEW: Jacob sends his ten sons to Egypt to buy food (vv. 1-5). Joseph recognizes his brothers, pretends to be a stranger, speaks harshly to them, accuses them of being spies and places them in prison (vv. 6-17). Joseph then tests his brother’s integrity by having one brother remain and bring back the younger brother and slips the money they gave him for the grain back in their sacks, creating the impression they are thieves (vv. 18-28). Simeon is held hostage as the ten brothers go back to report to Jacob all that happened and what was required to free Simeon (vv. 29-38).

KEY THOUGHT: The Lord, through Joseph, awakens his brother’s guilty consciences for the evil they have done and to see if they have genuinely repented from their sin against him. Joseph simply wants to uncover his brother’s hearts.

BACKGROUND: Seven years must have passed between chapters 41 and 42. The reality of the famine that Joseph predicted has now settled in across Egypt and even into Canaan. Jacob is concerned that they may die if they do not go to Egypt to buy grain for food. This chapter is preceded by Joseph’s dream in Genesis 37.5-11. The dream now becomes a reality as his brothers come to Egypt and bow down before Joseph, whom they do not recognize. Joseph remembered the dreams he had about them and begins to test them by speaking harshly to them by accusing them in being spies in the land (v.9).

I. THE CONCERN OF JACOB

A. LOOK IT UP: (*Read Genesis 42.1-5*)

1. What is Jacob’s concern and what did he hear?
2. What were his sons doing?
3. What was Jacob’s instruction to his ten sons?

B. LEARN IT:

1. *“Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt;” - (v. 2) -* As stated above, seven years must have passed between the end of chapter 41 and the beginning of chapter 42. The reality of the famine has now set in for most of the world around Egypt and the land of Canaan. These verses show Jacob’s patriarchal concern through his leadership. While his sons are “staring at one another” (v.1), Jacob trust the intel he has received concerning food in Egypt, calls his sons into action to go down and purchase grain so that they “may live and not die.”

- C. LIVE IT:** One of the burdens of leadership is being concerned for the welfare of the people you are responsible for. Jacob’s sons had not yet learned this. Their actions were

more like the hired hands that Jesus speaks of in John 10:12 - *“He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd...sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.”* What we learn from Jacob is that we need to have the concern for God’s people like the Good Shepherd and be not like the “hired hand.”

II. THE CHARGE BY JOSEPH

A. LOOK IT UP: (Read Genesis 37.5ff and 42.6)

1. What is the connection between Genesis 37.5ff and 42.6?
2. How did Joseph treat his brothers?
3. What did he charge them with and what was his plan with them?

B. LEARN IT:

1. *“And Joseph’s brothers came and bowed down to him with their faces to the ground”* (v. 6b) - Showing proper respect to the master of the land was expected, but here, the bowing had more meaning that the brothers realized. Their position of humble adoration before Joseph fulfilled his dreams as he *“remembered the dreams which he had about them,”* (v.9a).
2. *“...you are spies;...”* - (v. 9b) - Joseph’s treatment of his brothers first seems vengeful and harsh. But, Joseph’s treated his brothers this way in order to discover how they felt toward Jacob, and his younger brother Benjamin. First, Joseph disguise himself so that they would not recognize him and then begins to interrogate his brothers, even accusing and charging them in being “spies.” From this interrogation, Joseph confirms the identity that these were in fact his brothers from Canaan, that his father and younger brother, Benjamin are is alive as well (vv. 10-13).
3. *“by this you will be tested”* (v.15) - Joseph would put to test their testimony of being “honest men” (v. 11). The brothers he knew before were not honorable or honest men. Therefore, they unwittingly provided grounds for Joseph to test them. Even though he suspected they were telling the truth, the purpose of his test had a hidden agenda.
4. *“Send one of you, that he may get your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested...”* (v. 16) - The initial test was to send only one back to retrieve the younger brother while the other nine remained confined in prison. This test was bound by an oath *“by the life of Pharaoh”* (v. 15). The nature of this oath is to prohibit the brothers from returning, unless the youngest brother is escorted back to Egypt. If the party fails to fulfill the obligation, the judgement “you are spies” would stand (v.16). What Joseph is testing here is his brothers’ integrity.
5. *“So he put them all together in prison for three days”* (v. 17) - Joseph gives the brothers ample time to decide who would go back to Canaan, leaving the others behind.

C. LIVE IT: Today, I had to test the integrity of someone who came in for a benevolent need. The person claimed to be a regular attender at our church. Even though the person was in our database, there was no record of his attendance. So, I begin asking him questions about the church, the worship services, and who he knew. He could not answer the questions and proceeded to get angry. The man, felt with reason, that I was interrogating him and even gave me the reason why I was doing so because I was questioning the integrity of his honesty, even though he said he was an honest man, I found him to be false. The man tried to impress me with his words of faith, yet in previous confrontations, he has never exhibited any kind behavior or lifestyle that would lead anyone to believe he was a true believer. All he wanted was food and money, but not the message of the gospel or its help for eternal salvation, life and righteousness. I would had been willing to help him if he would had been honest with me, but instead, he left angry at me and the church and without food. Thus, the judgement stands.

III. THE CONVICTION OF THE BROTHERS

A. LOOK IT UP: *(Read Genesis 42.18-24a)*

1. What is Joseph professing in verse 18?
2. What do the brothers see in the conditions of the test by Joseph?
3. How did Joseph react to their admittance of guilt?

B. LEARN IT:

1. *“Do this and live, for I fear God” (v.18)* - Joseph’s profession of faith in God seen in these verses shows his brothers that he realized that he was under not simply the authority of Pharaoh, but primarily under the true divine authority of “Elohim.” Because of this he tells them that he would be fair with them. His test would guarantee Benjamin’s safe passage to Egypt, something that Joseph had every reason to worry about, in view of his brothers’ treatment of himself. When only seeing just the ten, this would have crossed Joseph’s mind - had they done away with Benjamin as they tried to do with him since Jacob’s affections for Joseph was replaced with Benjamin and not one of the ten?
2. *“Truly we are guilty concerning our brother...” (v. 21)* - The brothers saw divine judgment in what had happened to them (vv. 21-23). They were feeling the guilt of their conviction by what they had done to Joseph, not knowing that they were confessing this in front of him and that Joseph understood what they were saying. The agenda of Joseph was proving its purpose. Joseph wanted to assure himself that they had also borne the fruits of genuine repentance, thus did not reveal himself just yet until they brought Benjamin back.
3. *“And he turned away from them and wept” (v. 24a)* - Joseph was moved by his brothers’ admittance of guilt in the hearing of their confession. We see that Joseph is not being moved out of vengeance, but out of fear of the Lord and now out of tenderness and love for his family.

- C. LIVE IT:** What is it that God wants from us the most? Psalm 51.17 says, *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”* This is what Joseph saw. What more could God want from us in order to do His perfect work of redemption and reconciliation. God is not interested in us covering up our sins with a spiritual bandaid, He desires us to feel the pain and conviction of sin so that there may be true and genuine repentance before the healing love of His grace can take effect in our lives.

IV. THE CONFINEMENT OF SIMEON

A. LOOK IT UP: *(Read Genesis 42.24b-28)*

1. Why do you suppose Joseph chose Simeon, rather than the eldest brother, Reuben or any other brother?
2. What orders did Joseph give to his servants? Was Joseph testing them again or was he showing them grace?
3. How did his brothers react when they saw the money in their bags and why?

B. LEARN IT:

1. *“...he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes”* (v. 24) - Joseph could have taken Reuben as his hostage, but in over hearing how he had talked his brothers out of killing him, he did not want to tip them off who he was and so, chose Simeon instead who was the next oldest brother and perhaps because of his previous cruelty and callousness towards his father (34.25; cf. 49.5-7).
2. *“What is this that god has done to us?”* (v. 28) - Joseph had restored his brothers money back to them out of the goodness of his heart. His gracious act would help them with their needs on their return trip, but it would also cause them to search their souls further as they contemplated the implication of their good fortune. When they first discovered the money they regarded Joseph’s kindness as God’s divine punishment as *“their hearts sank, and turned trembling...”* (v. 28). This aroused their guilt even more as God worked behind what they were experiencing. This was the Holy Spirit convicting them of sin.

- C. LIVE IT:** Divine guilt being laid upon by the conviction of the Holy Spirit is heavy. John 16.8 tells us that the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin. Carrying the guilt of sin is not carrying a guilty conscience or shame over sin. Those are natural feelings everyone feels generally. Divine guilt is also not the sense of divine punishment. The conviction of sin is also not merely knowing the difference of right versus wrong. True guilt, is the conviction to convince someone of the truth. Thus, the Holy Spirit acts as a prosecuting attorney who exposes evil, reproves the evil doers, and convinces people that they need a Savior. Therefore, to be convicted is to feel the sheer loathsomeness of sin.

This is what Joseph's brothers were feeling, this is what every true believer will feel when the Holy Spirit convicts them of their sin and shows them their need of a Savior.

V. THE CONSTERNATION OF JACOB

A. LOOK IT UP: *(Read Genesis 42.29-38)*

1. How did Jacob receive the news from his sons? List his reactions.

B. LEARN IT:

1. "...they came to their father Jacob...they told him all that had happened to them..." (v. 29) - Each time Jacob's sons had left home, they returned with more money but minus a brother (chs 37-42). One would begin to think that Jacob suspected that his sons sold Simeon. Jacob's sons soften the news considerably, making it sound like Simeon was a guest of Joseph until they came back with Benjamin, instead of saying that Simeon was confined to prison and they were being tested for their honesty and would be judged as spies if they did not return with the young lad.
2. "*You have bereaved me of my children*" (v.36) - The finding of the money in the sacks breached wider the relationship between Jacob and his sons, but it drew the brothers closer together. Jacob despaired in consternation not only because he distrusted his sons and the Egyptian ruler, he had also forgotten the promises of God once again (see 37.35 and 42.36). Jacob concludes that "*all these things are against me.*" But, what was really happening, is that God was for him and causing all this to happen for the good of his people. Soon, Jacob would realize God's blessing in all this. But, for now, Jacob sulks in his own anxiety by saying, "*you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow*" if they were to take Benjamin back with them to Egypt and he does not return.

- C. **LIVE IT:** What we do not know is that most of our troubles arise from what we do not know. Believers are often anxious over the things they cannot control. In the gospel, Jesus reminds us: "*Do not be worried about your life...or tomorrow*" (Matthew 6.25-34). The Apostle Paul echoes the same when he writes: "*Be anxious for nothing...*" (Phil. 4.6-7).

CONCLUSION: The overall conclusion is then God disciplines His own for the sole purpose to invite them to participate in His redemptive plan.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH
Lesson 7: “Surety and Sacrifice”
Genesis 43.1-44.34

OVERVIEW: Chapters 43-45 are a unit describing what happened when Joseph’s brothers returned to Egypt. This unit is arranged in a chiasmic order which is found in Hebrew writings. This unit consist of seven scenes with the central scene being the arrest of Joseph’s brothers (44.13).

- A. Jacob sends his sons to Egypt (43.1-14)
 - B. Arrival in Egypt the steward and the brothers (43.15-25)
 - C. Lunch with Joseph (43.26-34)
 - D. The brothers arrested (44.1-13)
 - C’. Joseph’s self-disclosure (44.14-45.15)
 - B’. Departure from Egypt; Pharaoh and the brothers (45.16-24)
 - A’. Jacob receives his sons’ report (45.25-28).

KEY THOUGHT: The testing of his brothers produced what Joseph was hoping for; change in his brothers hearts: repentance of sin and loyalty to Benjamin and Jacob.

BACKGROUND: Joseph is given authority by Pharaoh to govern the storage and distribution of food in Egypt because of the severe famine. Jacob sends his ten sons to buy food in Egypt so they will not die. Joseph tests his brothers who must prove they are not spies by bringing Benjamin back to him while Simeon remains in jail. The brothers return with Benjamin, yet Joseph puts his brothers through one more test to prove that they have really changed.

I. THE PROMISE OF SURETY

A. LOOK IT UP: (*Genesis 43.1-15*)

1. When told by Jacob to go back to Egypt to buy food, who steps up to be the spokesman for the brothers? Why not Reuben? (see 42.37-38)
2. What does Judah remind Jacob?
3. What does Judah offer Jacob in exchange for taking Benjamin to Egypt?

B. LEARN IT:

1. “*Judah spoke to him...*” (v. 3) - Because the famine had become so severe and Jacob’s family had finished eating all the grain, Jacob instructs his sons to go back to Egypt to buy food. Judah steps up and takes the lead and spoke for his brothers because Jacob had already refused Reuben (42.38-38). Simeon was in Egypt, and Levi had previously forfeited his father’s confidence (ch. 34). As Judah spoke to Jacob, he reminds him of the condition set forth by the man in Egypt (Joseph) that “*You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you*” (v.5b).

2. “...send the lad with me...” (v.8) - Judah makes a request to take Benjamin with them to free Simeon and buy food and urges his father to cease from his procrastination for they “could have returned twice” if they had not delayed (v. 10). Judah refers to Benjamin compassionately as “the lad” (Hb. na’ar; cf Joseph, 37.2) revealing a caring stance toward the young man.
3. “I myself will be surety for him;” (v.9) - Judah intensifies his personal resolve by offering his own life to bear the lifelong shame and blame of failure if he does not “bring him back” to Jacob. This differs from Reuben’s offer of his two sons’ lives as security which were not a sufficient guarantee for Jacob because he had already lost one son and Benjamin alone is left. To take Benjamin away from him would “bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow” (42.38b). The word “surety” (Hb. ‘arab’) means to braid, intermix, to give to be security. It is used in connection with making mortgages, to occupy and to give pledges. It is the same word (pledge), possibly an unintended echo of Judah’s disgrace when he put up a “pledge” for Tamar’s services. It should be noted, that from this time on that Judah becomes the leader of Jacob’s sons (cf. 49.8-10; Matt. 1.2, 17; Luke 3.23,33). It should also be noted that in God’s sovereign way it is actually Judah’s words and plan that ultimately saved Joseph’s life (37.21,26) and now to save not only the family, but Simeon and Benjamin’s lives.
4. “...If it must be so, then do this;...” (v.11) - Jacob finally gives in and then instructs his sons to take the best of their goods and double the money and then gives the blessing to take Benjamin and personally blesses his sons, then concedes that he must trust the Lord in that “if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved” (v. 14).

C. LIVE IT: Both Jacob and Judah would need to make a sacrifice to not only care for the family’s welfare, but also to free Simeon from Egypt. Jacob is placed in a position where he would need to trust in the Lord with the object of his affection (Benjamin) while Judah is placed in a situation where he is willing to offer his life as a pledge (surety) if he does not succeed in bringing Benjamin back. Both depict trust and self-denial which are two characteristics of faith. Jacob’s grandfather, Abraham was willing to do both by trusting in the Lord in obeying Him by offering his only son, Isaac, as an offering to the Lord - His faith was reckoned to him because he looked forward and rejoiced in the day when God’s Lamb would come to offer Himself to take away our sins as one Holy sacrifice (cf. Gen. 15.6; Rom. 4.3; 20-22; Jams 2.23; Jn. 8.56).

II. THE STIRRING OF EMOTION

A. LOOK IT UP: (Genesis 43.16-34)

1. What was the brothers reaction when they were brought to Joseph’s house?
2. When trying to explain to the house steward about the money in their sacks, what did the steward say to the brothers that eased their fear?
3. What was Joseph’s reaction when he saw and spoke to his brothers and Benjamin?

4. How did Joseph expressed his hospitality to his brothers and Benjamin?

B. LEARN IT:

1. *“Be at ease, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; ...”* (v. 23) - When Joseph’s brothers arrived, Joseph saw Benjamin with them and had his house steward to prepare a meal and to have the brothers brought to his house. The brothers were afraid and began to explain about the money in their sacks because they were afraid that they would become Joseph’s slaves along with their donkeys (v. 18). The steward being in on Joseph’s secret plan from the beginning expresses to Joseph’s brothers one of the central themes of the book of Genesis: *“Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure...”*. These words by the steward assured them that they had nothing to fear because he knew about the money and then releases their brother Simeon to them.
2. *“As he lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin...he was deeply stirred over his brother”* (vv. 28-29) - The last thing the brothers expected upon their return was to be entertained in the home of the man who accused them of being spies in the land. They were brought in and as was the custom, given water, had their feet washed and their donkeys were given fodder (v.24). When Joseph came home the brothers bowed before him and presented him with gifts. With the addition of his brother Benjamin, the dream of all his brothers bowing before him is now fulfilled (Gen. 37.5). Benjamin was 16 years younger than Joseph, therefore he would have been 23 at the time and Joseph 39 (41.46; 45.6). Seeing his own full blooded brother of his mother, Benjamin, causes Joseph to weep. He leaves the room until he could regain control of himself.
3. *“So they served him by himself, and them by themselves...”* (v.32) - The caste system in Egypt required that Joseph, as a member of the upper class, eat at a table separate from his Egyptian companions. The Hebrew sat at a third table, since they were foreigners (v.32). The Hebrew and other foreigners ate animals that the Egyptians regarded as sacred. They Egyptians also followed strict rules for the ceremonial cleaning of their food before they ate it. Therefore, this made the Hebrews “loathsome” to the Egyptians. It is to be noted that Joseph hosts a meal for his brothers, who, years before, had callously sat down to eat while he languished in a pit. Joseph also gives the highest honor to Benjamin as his distinguished guest, by giving him larger and better portions of food than his brothers received. By doing this, Joseph sought not only to honor Benjamin, but also wanted to see if they would hate Benjamin as they had hated him for being his father’s favorite son. As they dined, indication shows that they passed this test as they *“feasted and drank freely with him”* (v.34).

C. LIVE IT: This is your time to react to God’s word here:

1. How would you react if you were one of Joseph’s brothers being invited into his home?

2. By Joseph's dream being fulfilled, what does this say about God's plan and design, especially, in light of Romans 8.28?
3. Have you been in a family situation where you have been mistreated and now you have an opportunity to forgive because of the restitution of others? How did you respond? How should you have responded?

III. THE OFFERING OF SACRIFICE

A. LOOK IT UP: (*Genesis 44.1-34*)

1. Was Joseph finished testing his brothers? If not, what was this test about?
2. What confession is made by Judah to Joseph? (vv.14-17)
3. How does Judah defend and protect Benjamin?
4. What does Judah offer to Joseph for Benjamin? (vv.29-34)

B. LEARN IT:

1. *"And put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest..." (44.2)* - Joseph had one more test for his brothers by framing Benjamin and charging him with stealing Joseph's silver cup. This test will reveal the brothers true loyalty to Benjamin.
2. *"God has found out the iniquity of your servants..." (v. 16b)* - The events of this test prompted the brothers through Judah to acknowledge that God was punishing them for their treatment of Joseph many years earlier. Judah's plea for Benjamin voiced their genuineness of the brother's loyalty to Benjamin which contrasted their former disloyalty to Joseph.
3. *"...Now, therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad a slave to my Lord" (v.32b)* - Judah acting as the spokesman for the brothers explains to Joseph the whole story by not hiding or excusing the brother's guilt. This speech becomes the longest in Genesis. Several key words are highlighted: "servant" (10 times), "my lord" (7 times), and "father" (13 times). Judah pleads to Joseph to take his life over Benjamin's because he had offered his own life as a "pledge" and "surety" if harm came to his father's son. Judah was willing to a slave to Joseph and remain behind in his service so that the young man may go free. Here we see the change in the brothers, especially in Judah as he represents the ten and his father. Even though Jacob had not changed as he still cling to his youngest son, but the brothers had changed. They now love their father and Benjamin. Rather than hating their father for favoring Joseph and then Benjamin over themselves, the brothers now were working for their father's welfare.

NOTE: Judah's offering of himself voluntarily becomes the first instance of selfless human substitution in Scripture (cf. 19.8, 22.13).

C. LIVE IT: Jesus teaches us that there is no greater love than the one who lays down his life for his friends (Jn. 15.13). Paul, again, tells us to have the same mind of Christ by stating: *“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”* (Phil. 2.5-8). The love we have for one another will only be as great as our love for God. Love for God is not only a conscience mind set, but it is something that is rooted in our very being that comes from God, in our hearts as it bleeds out to those around us. Instead of seeking our own interest, we seek the interest of others for the sake and call of the gospel of Christ and thus, glorify the Lord in word and deed, *“doing nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind”* as we regard others more important than ourselves (Phil. 2.3; Col. 3.17).

CONCLUSION: How does God teach us to be loyal to one another?

1. By convicting us of previous sins.
2. Getting us to love others unselfishly.

These qualities are essential for every believer, but also for the leaders of God’s people.

In Ken Sande’s book entitled: “The Peace Maker,” he offers these four basic principles of peacemaking:

1. *Glorify God:* How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?
2. *Get the log out of your eye:* How can I show Jesus’ work in me by taking responsibility for my contribution to this conflict?
3. *Gently restore:* How can I lovingly serve others by helping them take responsibility for their contribution to this conflict?
4. *Go and be reconciled:* How can I demonstrate the forgiveness of God and encourage a reasonable solution to this conflict?

We certainly see these principles in the story of Joseph and his brothers - hopefully others will see this in you and your relationships with others.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH
Lesson 8: “THE GREAT FAMILY GATHERING PART I”
Genesis 45.1-28

OVERVIEW: Joseph makes himself known to his brothers (45.1-4). He tells them not to grieve, but that God sent him to Egypt to preserve life (vv. 5-7). He then tells them to go and get their father for he will provide for them in Egypt (vv. 8-15). Pharaoh hears about Joseph’s brothers and gives them the best the land has to offer (vv. 16-20). His brothers leave to bring back Israel “Jacob” (vv. 21-24) and told him everything that happened. Israel was stunned, relieved and agreed to go to Egypt to see his son Joseph (vv. 25-28).

KEY THOUGHT: It is God who causes all things to work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose.

BACKGROUND: In chapter 44, Joseph had one more test for his brothers to see how they would not only protect Benjamin’s welfare, but their father’s as well. When Joseph had witnessed and heard from Judah his confession of iniquity and his concern for Benjamin and his father, Chapter 45 begins with Joseph being moved with emotion and revealed himself before his brothers who were dismayed at his presence.

I. THE GREAT REVEALING

A. LOOK IT UP: (*Read Genesis 45.1-15*)

1. How intense was Joseph’s emotion over his brothers?
2. What was his brother’s reaction when Joseph revealed himself to them?
3. For what purpose did Joseph say he was sent to Egypt and who sent him?
4. What promise did Joseph make to his brothers concerning their households and father?

B. LEARN IT:

1. “*Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am Joseph!...’*” (v. 3) - Joseph emotionally revealed his identity to his brothers when he could no longer hold back his feelings. Joseph was so impressed with the sincerity of Judah’s repentance and the tenderness of his affection for Benjamin and his father, Jacob, that Joseph broke down completely. The tears that Joseph wept were uncontrollable. His weeping was so loud that the Egyptians and Pharaoh’s household heard it (vv. 1-2).
2. “*...for they were dismayed at his presence*” (v.3) - When Joseph revealed himself before his brothers they “*could not answer him*” because they were “*dismayed at his presence*” (v.3). The word for “dismayed” describes one who trembles inwardly, as in being alarmed or even frightened. The New American Commentary describes them as being like a person seized by panic when surprised by obvious doom. It is possible

they thought they were seeing a ghost or felt that certain doom was about to fall upon them by their brother who would seek revenge on their lives. They probably had the feeling as Psalm 45.5 expresses... *"Your arrows are sharp; The peoples fall under You; Your arrows are in the heart of the King's enemies."*

3. *"...for God sent me before you to preserve life."* (v.5) - Joseph comforts his brothers by inviting them to come closer to him to see that it was really him and consoles them not to be angry with themselves because they had sold him into slavery, but that God had orchestrated this for their benefit to preserve life. He states it against in verse 8, by revealing to them that it was God's own doing, not theirs. Everything in the Genesis story has now been leading up to this point as God directs the maze of human life to achieve His good and set purposes for a "great deliverance" (cf. Acts 2.23; 4.28). God's plan was to use Joseph to preserve the house of Israel through the famine (v.7).
4. *"There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine to come..."* (v.11) - Joseph's appreciation in God's sovereign control is the cause for his gracious forgiveness and acceptance of his brothers, even to the point of providing care for them through the remaining five years of the famine. Joseph apparently had been planning for his father's family to move down to Egypt if or when his brothers would have proven that their attitude had changed (v.10). "Goshen" (a Semitic rather than an Egyptian name) was the most fertile part of Egypt (cf. v.18). It lay in the delta region northeast of the Egyptian capital, Memphis.
5. *"He fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept"* (v. 14) - Joseph embraced Benjamin and all his brothers. He expressed his love to them and confirmed his forgiveness of them. This reconciliation is recorded as he and his brothers "talked" with each other (v.15).

C. LIVE IT: Here we see an appreciation for God's sovereign control produced in Joseph's character marked by graciousness, forgiveness, and acceptance. The events were part of God's plan to bring blessing to His people. Even after having suffered abuse in the past, as Joseph did, there is no excuse for holding bitterness. Jesus reminds us in the "Disciple's Prayer" (The Lord's Prayer) that we are to forgive those who have trespassed against us, for how can we expect the Lord to forgive us if we are unwilling to forgive others (Matt. 6.14-15). The verses below are just a few great reminders why we should forgive one another:

1. Colossians 3.13-14
2. Hebrews 12.14-15
3. Ephesians 4.31-32
4. Isaiah 55.6-7
5. Daniel 9.9
6. Psalm 103.8-13

II. THE GREAT RECEPTION

A. LOOK IT UP: (Read Genesis 45.16-20)

1. What was Pharaoh's response to the news concerning Joseph's brothers?
2. What gift did Pharaoh offer to Joseph's family?

B. LEARN IT:

1. *"Now when the news was heard in Pharaoh's house..." (v. 16)* - Eventually, the news reverberated throughout Pharaoh's house concerning Joseph's brothers. This pleased Pharaoh with exceptional generosity because of his high regard for Joseph. His hospitality was marked by giving to Joseph's family the best the land had to offer. Notice that Pharaoh's extended invitation to Joseph's family was an invitation, not a command. Pharaoh had no authority to command Jacob to move into Egypt. Jacob was free to accept or reject this offer. If Jacob chose to accept it, he would be free to return to Canaan whenever he chose. Later, in four hundred years, after Israel had settled in Goshen, they would not be able to leave Egypt due to a new Pharaoh's policy concerning the Israelites as residents of Egypt.
2. *"... for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours" (v. 20)* - Joseph is able to make good on his promise to provide for his family because he has the backing of Pharaoh. The expression "the best" is described as being the "fat of the land" (v.18). It refers to the finest products of harvest (cf. Num 18.12; Deut. 32.14; Ps. 81.16). The king's kindness includes Egyptian carts for easier travel, and he instructs them to travel light, easing their minds that all that is desirable for a new settlement is awaiting them (vv. 19-20). They are to bring their families (children and wives), which indicates permanent settlement. No more living as nomadic life.

C. LIVE IT: The picture we see in this reception is actually a picture of restoration. As Joseph's brothers are received not only by Joseph himself, but also the house and Pharaoh himself. This is not a reception or restoration of good fortune, but a picture of God's blessing that was promised through the seed of Jacob. It is the picture of the blueprint of hope that lies for the people of Israel at the end of the Pentateuch when they are to go into the land and enjoy it as God's good gift (cf. Dt. 30.5). For believers in Christ, this blueprint is also a picture for us when we will dwell with the Lord in heaven for the ages to come where we are reminded by John - *"And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost."* Revelation 22.17

III. THE GREAT REVIVAL

A. LOOK IT UP: (Read Genesis 45.21-28)

1. What was Jacob's reaction to the news about Joseph?
2. What happened to Jacob's spirit after hearing about Joseph?
3. What was Jacob's resolve about seeing Joseph?

B. LEARN IT:

1. “...but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of garments” (v. 22) - Joseph now provides for his brothers’ journey back to Canaan to bring back Israel and all their family. Joseph exceeds Pharaoh’s directive by outfitting his brothers with extravagant gifts of clothing. Joseph shows that he is not concerned about the threat of jealousy from his brothers by giving to Benjamin added wealth with the five sets of garments. Here Joseph is demonstrating that he is fully capable of performing the guarantees made to the family throughout the term of the famine. Outfitting them with these garments is a signal to his brothers that mourning is over. It signals a revival of their restored relationship and the preservation of Jacob’s household.
2. “...do not quarrel on the journey” (v.24) - Joseph’s final directive is bit of a puzzle for commentary writers. Several ideas have been proposed as to what Joseph meant by this. The most plausible one for me would be that Joseph wanted his brothers to retrieve their father in haste (vv. 9, 13) and not be bogged down by any distraction. Another thought to concerning Joseph’s directive is forgiveness. Since he had forgiven them, they too should forgive one another (cf. Matt. 18.21-35). One final note on the word “quarrel,” it could mean that they should not “fear” (cf. Ec. 15.14). They should not be afraid of robbers as they returned to Canaan, or fearful of returning to Egypt in the future, for as Paul stated - “...if God is for us, who is against us?” (Rom. 8.31b).
3. “...But he was stunned, for he did not believe them” (v. 26) - Joseph is not the only person who has suffered in this narrative. As we recall, Jacob has suffered greatly, even to the point with deep emotional grief at the news of Joseph’s supposed death based upon his sons’ deception and malice (Gen. 37.33-35). Jacob also suffered because of his own failure to cling to the promises that God had given: to his forefathers, to himself and to Joseph in his dreams. Jacob always had a difficult time believing without seeing. Thus, he was “stunned,” meaning, he became “faint.” The news about Joseph was too remarkable for Jacob to accept. Like Thomas, when the disciples told him that they had seen the risen Lord, Thomas responds by saying, “Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe” (John 20.25). Thomas, like Jacob, had heard about the promises concerning Jesus, from Jesus Himself. Yet, he was in disbelief unless he could witness it for himself. But, as you recall Jesus response to Thomas when Jesus revealed Himself to him stated: “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed” (John 20.29).
4. “...the spirit of their father Jacob revived” (v.27) - Just like Thomas once again, Jacob’s spirit was not “revived” until he saw the wagons Joseph sent with his brothers. The unveiling of these carts to Jacob was liken to Jesus unveiling Himself to Thomas. Jacob’s heart suddenly takes on a new heart. It is interesting to note that Jacob here is called “Israel” noting the descent of the nation where Jacob’s descendants will rise to prominence. Thus, Israel says, “It is enough; my son Joseph

is still alive. I will go and see him before I die” (v.28). Now, there is no hesitation for Jacob to make the long trek to Egypt to see Joseph for himself for he “must go” and see him.

5. **NOTE:** Both Abraham and Jacob received their sons back from the dead figuratively. Both sons prefigure the death and resurrection of Christ, but Joseph even more so. Both are not only alive, but rulers over all.

C. LIVE IT: What this narrative should teach us is that everything about faith is not about sight. “...*for we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5.7).* Jacob’s grandfather (Abraham) walked by faith, not by sight. Joseph walked by faith, not by sight. Jesus blesses those who believe by faith and not by sight. So much of our life is built and lived around what we see, touch, smell, hear, and taste. Those are our physical senses that help guide us and protect us from harming ourselves. But, we also have those same senses spiritually. The Bible instructs us:

1. “**Taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34.8).**
2. “*Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifest through us the **sweet aroma** of the knowledge of Him in every place” (2 Cor. 2.14).*
3. “*He **touched** my mouth with it and said, ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven” (Isaiah 6.7).*
4. “*But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have **heard** the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance” (Luke 8.15)*

CONCLUSION: There will be a great family gathering for all of us who believe by faith that Christ Jesus died and rose again. The Bible tells us that when we die, we will be with Jesus in paradise and we all will be united together in heaven forever and ever where we shall reign, worship and serve the Lord (Rev. 22).

LIFE OF JOSEPH
Lesson 9: “PROMISES AND PROVISIONS OF GOD”
Genesis 46-47

OVERVIEW: God tells Jacob not to be afraid about moving to Egypt and that He will make him a great nation there (46.1-7). Joseph meets his father and family in Goshen and prepares them to meet Pharaoh (vv.8-34). Jacob blesses Pharaoh for allowing his family to settle in Goshen (47.1-12). As the famine worsens, Joseph wisely administrates the distribution of food for land to save the people from starvation (vv.13-19) and provides seed for the people to sow (vv. 20-26) as Israel dwells in the land of Goshen and becomes fruitful and numerous, Jacob close to death, worships the Lord (vv. 27-31).

KEY THOUGHT: There is no reason for God’s people to fear because His promises are true and certain.

BACKGROUND: Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and instructs them to go back to Canaan to bring Jacob to Egypt. The brothers return to Canaan and told Jacob that Joseph is alive and is ruler over all the land of Egypt. Jacob is stunned by this news, yet his spirit is revived and agrees to go to Egypt so that he may see his son Joseph before he dies.

I. GOD’S PROMISE TO ISRAEL

A. LOOK IT UP: (*Read Genesis 46.1-7*)

1. What was the first thing Jacob did before traveling to Egypt?
2. What promises did God make to Jacob?
3. Compare and contrast Genesis 45.19-20 with 46.5-7. What was the one thing Pharaoh said to leave behind and promised? What did Jacob bring with him and why?

B. LEARN IT:

1. “...and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac” (46.1) - “Beersheba” is located on the southern border of Canaan. Jacob and his caravan stopped there to “offer sacrifices” to Yahweh. Jacob’s grandfather, Abraham had planted a “tamarisk tree” there as a marker and “called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God” (21.33). Even Isaac his father built an altar in Beersheba in honor of the Lord for appearing to him (26.24-25). It could be that it was at this altar that Jacob was presenting sacrifices to the Lord for the journey as he looked forward to seeing Joseph again and leaving the land promised to his family by God. Another factor in this journey is that Jacob probably was aware of the prophecy given to Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved in a foreign land for 400 years (15.13).

2. “...do not be afraid...for I will make you a great nation there” (46.3) - This is one of four “do not be afraid” consolations that God gave in Genesis (v. 3; cf. 15.1; 21.17; 26.24). God promised to make Jacob’s family “a great nation” in Egypt (cf. 12.2; 15.13-14; 17.6,20; 18.18; 21.13). God promises Jacob that He “will go down with” him to Egypt and bring him back up for, “Joseph will close your eyes” (v.4). One commentary noted that Egypt became the womb that God used to form His nation. Just as God fulfilled this prophecy of bringing his people into this land for a time, we later learn through the Exodus story that God did bring Jacob’s descendants back 400 years later. God also promised that he will not die until he saw Joseph, a present promised fulfilled in Genesis 49.29-33.
3. “and they took their livestock and their property...” (v.6) - In (45.20), Pharaoh had told them not to bother bringing their possessions because the wealth of the land of Egypt was theirs. The bringing of all their possessions with them, including the livestock, was probably more about compassion, than trust, because it would have been cruel to leave them behind and none would have survived the famine because of its severity.

C. LIVE IT: The promises of God are true and certain. As Christians we are to stand on God’s promises because in them lies our hope. Peter writes, “For by these he has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust” (2 Peter 1.4). Then Peter gives us application on how to live by applying to our faith - “diligence, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love” (2 Peter 1.5-7). We worship, walk and witness for our God because we have a hope in the promises He makes towards those He loves.

II. GOD’S PROVISION FOR ISRAEL

A. LOOK IT UP: (Read Genesis 46.8-47.12)

1. How many “direct descendants” came with Jacob to Egypt?(46.8-27)
2. What instructions did Joseph give to his family to prepare them when they meet Pharaoh? (46.28-34)
3. How old is Jacob at this time? (47.8-9)

B. LEARN IT:

1. “All the persons belonging to Jacob, who came to Egypt...” (v.26) - This section from verses 8-27 contains the list of the individuals in Jacob’s family about the time he moved to Egypt. Like in chapter 31, when Jacob left Paddan-aram, this move was also difficult for Jacob. Moses records for us here a total of 66 individuals which did not include the wives of Jacob’s sons. The humble beginning of this great nation

which began with Abraham and Sarah and is now represented by Jacob's household, will grow to be around 2.3-3.5 million at the time of the Exodus to the promise land.

2. *"Now let me die, since I have seen your face..." (v.30)* - Israel's reunion with Joseph is similar to his reunion with his brother Esau (32.3). In both situations, after a long period of separation, Jacob sent a party ahead to meet his relative (cf. v.28). When Joseph was reunited with his father, *"he fell on his neck and wept on his neck a long time"* (v.29). How wonderful it was that the Lord sustained Jacob these years so that Joseph would once again see his father alive and that Jacob would eventually die in peace being able to see his son. At last, these two, separated by 20 years of grief would be able to have these last years together.
3. *"And Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household,..." (v.31)* - Joseph's plan was to secure the land of Goshen as a dwelling place for the sons of Israel. Wisely, Joseph instructed his brothers to tell Pharaoh when they meet him and he asks, *"what is your occupation?"* to simply state that they were shepherds. The reason for this reply is that the Egyptians hated shepherds and thus would allow the Israelites to dwell by themselves in Goshen (v.34). Joseph's plan succeeded when he took five of his brothers (47.2) to meet Pharaoh and when they were asked by him concerning their occupation, they replied just as Joseph instructed, which resulted in Pharaoh giving the land of Goshen to them to settle, which was *"the best of the land."* (47.6). So, Joseph settled his father and brothers in Goshen and *"provided for his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to their little ones"* (47.12).

- C. **LIVE IT:** This is a great passage that applies Christian family care. Too many times, even among Christians, seniors are left alone to fend for themselves. Joseph shows us the importance of honoring our parents before the commandment was given during the Exodus. This passage also demonstrate Christian care among the family of God as seen in the ingathering of Acts 2.42-47 where everyone was without need because of the Christian charity among the believers, demonstrating the gospel of Christ.

III. GOD'S PROVISION FOR PHARAOH

A. **LOOK IT UP:** (Read Genesis 47.13-26)

1. When the money was gone in the land of Egypt, what trades for food did Joseph make with the people?
2. Who now owned the land in Egypt and what statute was made by Joseph with the people that has existed even during the writing of this book?
3. Out of gratitude for saving their lives, what were the Egyptians willing to offer to Pharaoh?

B. LEARN IT:

1. *“So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh...” (47.20)* - God not only provided for Israel during this severe famine, but this next section shows how He provided for Pharaoh and Egypt. Part of this provision begins with Jacob blessing Pharaoh (47.10). This was an unusual blessing since it implied that, in one sense that Jacob was superior to Pharaoh (i.e. as one of God’s elect) because usually, the lesser was blessed by the greater (Heb. 7.7). Jacob became a blessing to a Gentile world, ruler, and so fulfilled God’s promise of becoming a blessing partially. Another way God blessed Pharaoh and Egypt is through Joseph’s wisdom. Because of Joseph and his wise administration, he employed the process of trade, livestock and land for food which saved the Egyptians’ lives (47.13-19). Joseph’s wisdom is seen as the source of life for everyone in the land, and his wisdom is now a blessing to the nations. Thus, in one sense, through Joseph, the Lord blessed Egypt and the surrounding nations as promised by God to Abraham (Gen. 12.3). This foreshadows the future and complete fulfillment of Israel’s worldwide blessing of the nations through Christ Jesus our Lord (Gal. 3.8).

- C. LIVE IT:** The Bible is clear that any people who turn against not only His people, but also His only Son, will receive His full wrath. But, those who support His people and trust in His only Son, the Lord promises to bless. Our country has been blessed by being a supporter of Israel. But, I am afraid that support is waning as our government begins to turn its’ back on Israel. What a terrible and awful day that will be for our country .

IV. GOD’S KINDNESS TOWARDS ISRAEL**A. LOOK IT UP:** *(Read Genesis 47.27-31)*

1. As the Egyptians suffered in their own land, what was the conditions for Israel?
2. What vow did Jacob want from Joseph?
3. How did Israel celebrate the vow?

B. LEARN IT:

1. *“...and were fruitful and became very numerous” (47.27)* - Under Joseph’s administration Israel prospered by acquiring property and quickly reproducing in numbers. This was in contrast to Egypt. This increased number came without suffering or loss of independence. The fulfillment of God’s promise to increase the seed of the patriarchs was quickly advancing under Joseph’s rule. God’s design was to use Goshen as the womb by which God would birth a great nation (46.3). No longer being nomads, they are able to settle and reap the benefits of the fat land centered in the midst of famine.
2. *“And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years...” (47.28)* - Jacob “lived” his last “17 years” in the care of Joseph, who ironically, lived the first 17 years under the care of his father, Jacob (37.2).

3. “...*please do not bury me in Egypt*” (47.29) - Jacob’s death seemed to be approaching so he calls for Joseph and made him swear to bury him in the Promised Land (“with my fathers”), rather than in Egypt (cf. 24.2-3). The practice of the oath by placing one’s “*hand under my thigh*” (v.29b) was a ritual connected with making a solemn promise. Just as Abraham did not want his son, Isaac, to take on a wife from among the people in the land where he was dwelling, Jacob in like manner, did not want to be buried among the Egyptians, but with his fathers in his own land. This same theme returns when Joseph makes his sons swear that they will carry his bones back to the Promised Land, a request carried out in Joshua 24.32. A central element of the covenant with Abraham was the promise of the land. The request of the patriarchs to be buried in the land “with their fathers” shows their trust in the promises and faithfulness of God to His word. The theme of bones and the covenant promise would return later in Israel’s history in Ezekiel 37 with the prophecy of the “dry bones” when God would resurrect his people from exile like as a valley of dry bones.
4. “...*then Israel bowed in worship at the head of the bed*” (47.31) - Jacob, after receiving Joseph’s word of honor worshipped God for granting his wish by prostrating himself (bowed) on his bed in thanksgiving to the Lord. Here is Jacob now whose reputation mostly known as a cunning schemer, who trusted his own willfulness to achieve his ends is now in the face of the shadows of death showing that his ultimate hope is in the promise of God.

C. LIVE IT: God’s people thrive because of the Lord, not because of our own doing. The people of God are truly cared for by the promises and provisions of the Lord. Upon His promises, the church can stand on everyday until Jesus, His Son, comes back and takes us to His promise land.

LIFE OF JOSEPH
Lesson 10: “THE BLESSINGS OF GOD”
Genesis 48-50

OVERVIEW: We now come to the conclusion of the book of Genesis and the last days of Jacob and Joseph. In these remaining three chapters, there are references to earlier episodes in the book and the prophetic destiny of the tribes of Israel. These chapters remind us of God’s overarching plan and promise that His people will be great and a blessing to all nations. We also see that even though we are free to make our own choices, God determines the final outcome of all things. Israel, who is close to death adopts and blesses the two sons of Joseph (48.1-22), blesses and reveals each of his twelve sons’ destiny, including Judah who is given leadership over his brothers (49.1-27). Israel then charged his sons to bury him with his fathers in Canaan (49.28-33). After Jacob dies, Joseph receives permission from Pharaoh to go and bury his father in Canaan (50.1-11). As Israel’s sons buried Jacob in Canaan, they are comforted by Joseph who promises to provide for them (50.12-21). The book closes with Joseph’s death (50.22-26).

KEY THOUGHT: The blessings of God are true for those He loves and saves.

I. THE BLESSING THROUGH ADOPTION

A. LOOK IT UP: (*Read Genesis 48.1-22*)

1. Who did Jacob adopt as sons and which two sons of Jacob did they replace?
2. Why was Joseph not pleased when Jacob blessed his two sons?
3. What was the message of the blessing?
4. What gift did Joseph receive from his father that was greater than his brothers?

B. LEARN IT:

1. “...*God Almighty appeared to me at Luz...and Blessed me*” (48.3) - Jacob may be losing his health (v.1), but he is not losing his memory. He can recall the incident many years earlier when God appeared to him at Luz [Bethel] (35.9-15). Here, he repeats for Joseph the promises of God about fertility, multiplication, that his seed will be an assembly of nations, and finally the promise of land. He doesn’t mention the theophany element (his encounter with Jesus) and his name change, thus minimizing his role and maximizes God’s role in that event.
2. “*And now your two sons, who were born to you...are mine...*” (48.5) - When Jacob adopted Joseph’s two sons, “Ephraim” and “Manasseh,” they received equal standing with Joseph’s brothers. Manasseh would have been about 20-26 years of age at this time (41.50; 47.28). The blessing of these two sons bestowed on Joseph the double portion of the birthright (v.5; cf. v. 22; 1 Chron. 5.1-2). Jacob was also elevating Joseph to the level of himself. Joseph was the first son of Jacob’s intended first wife.

Jacob's reference to "Rachel" (v.7) shows that she, as the mother of Joseph, was in his mind in this act. This honored her.

3. *"Now the eyes of Israel were so dim from age that he could not see..." (48.10)* - Like his father's eyes (Isaac), Jacob's eyes were also failing in his old age. When Joseph presents his two sons (Ephraim and Manasseh) before him, he asks "who are these?" (v.8) The irony that is represented here is that Jacob had secured Isaac's blessing by guile and deceit, while Joseph is securing the blessing for his sons by honesty and righteousness. Jacob gives the Lord credit that he was able to see Joseph's sons (v.11) and recognized God's providential working and grace in his life, realizing how faithful God had been to him in spite of his own unfaithfulness.
4. *"Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh" (48.20)* - Joseph positioned his sons before Jacob with Ephraim (the youngest) under Jacob's left hand and Manasseh (the first born) under Jacob's right hand. This was part of the ancient Near Eastern adoption ritual to symbolize the adopter giving birth to the child in place of the birth mother. Jacob though, crossed his hands and Joseph being displeased by this, attempts to correct his father's seemingly mistake. Jacob knew exactly what he was doing by making Ephraim greater than Manasseh, thus Ephraim through this ritual becomes the first born before his brother Manasseh. The blessing that Jacob gives carries prophetic significance and force (vv. 19-20). Under the inspiration of God, Jacob deliberately gave Ephraim the privilege "firstborn blessing," and predicted his preeminence. This was the fourth consecutive generation of Abraham's descendants in which the normal pattern of the firstborn assuming prominence over the second born was reversed: Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Joseph over Reuben, and Ephraim over Manasseh. This blessing was fulfilled during the period of the Judges when the tribe of Ephraim had grown very large and influential. The combined tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh increased from 72,700 in the second year after the Exodus (Num. 1.32-35) to 85,200 forty years later (Num. 26.28-37). To contrast this, the tribe of Reuben and Simeon decreased from 105,800 to 65,930 during the same period. This influence continued as the Ephraimites took the lead among the ten northern tribes and flourished: to the extent that the Jews used the names "Ephraim" and "Israel" interchangeably. Their superiority among the tribes can be seen and traced back to this blessing (e.g. Judg 12.1).
5. *"Then Israel said to Joseph...and I give you one portion more than your brothers..." (v.22)* - Jacob firmly believed in God's promise to bring his descendants back into the Promised Land (cf. 46.4). Jacob's promise to Joseph is a play on words. The word "portion" means "ridge" or "shoulder of land" and is the same as "Shechem." Shechem is located in Manasseh's tribal territory. Joseph was buried in Shechem (Josh. 24.32). This land that Jacob had purchased (33.18-20), he considered it as a pledge of his descendants' future possession of the whole land. In Jesus' day, people spoke of "Shechem" (near Sychar) as what Jacob had given to Joseph (John 4.5).

C. LIVE IT: Believers who are being shepherd by God for a lifetime can see His purposes and plans for the future more clearly, even though their walk through this life has been difficult. Jesus promises to those who are His sheep (His church) the blessings of heaven such as the “tree of life” (Rev. 2.7); “not be hurt by the second death” (Rev. 2.11); “some of the hidden manna” (Rev. 2.17); “authority over the nations” (Rev. 2.26); “clothed in white garments” (Rev. 3.5); “make him a pillar in the temple” (Rev. 3.12); and finally “to sit down” with Christ on His throne (Rev. 3.21). Just as the promises made by Jacob were through divine inspiration, we have the divine inspiration of God’s promises written here in His word. All we have to do and trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey.

II. THE BLESSING OF A FUTURE

A. LOOK IT UP: *(Read Genesis 49.1-28)*

1. Why did Jacob pass the torch of leadership on to Judah over Judah’s three older brothers?
2. What is the destiny of Judah’s line?
3. What can you learn about the tribes of Israel from Jacob’s blessings on his sons and their future?

B. LEARN IT:

1. *“Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, ‘Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what shall befall you in the days to come.’ (49.1) - Jacob now has blessed Pharaoh (47.7-10), Ephraim and Manasseh (48.15-20), and now is about to bless all twelve of his sons and foretells what would become of each of them and their descendants. He disqualifies Reuben, Simeon and Levi from leadership, and gave that blessing to Judah. He also granted double portion to Joseph through his sons. This chapter is the last in Genesis to give the destinies of the family members of Abraham’s chosen line. It contains blessings, curses, judgments, and promises. Jacob blesses his twelve sons with the appropriate blessings listed below (v.28).*

SON	DESCRIPTION	DESTINY
Reuben (vv. 3-4)	“unstable water” (v.4)	“shall not have preeminence” (v.4) - Reuben forfeits his leadership because of his lust in his father’s bed (35.22).
Simeon & Levi (vv.5-7)	“swords are implements of violence” (v.5)	“dispersed them in Jacob” (v.7) - Both brothers will live scattered among the other tribes. They will become the smallest of all the tribes (Num. 26).

SON	DESCRIPTION	DESTINY
Judah (vv. 8-12)	“a lion’s whelp” - (v.9)	“the scepter shall not depart from Judah” (v. 10) - Judah possessed a lion like nature and becomes the leader of the other tribes (43.3-10; Judg 1.1-2). Through him came David and then the Messiah: “the Lion of the Tribe of Judah” (Rev. 5.5). The scepter (v.10) is the symbol of royal rule without end.
Zebulun (v.13)	“shall be a haven for ships” (v. 13)	“Shall dwell at the seashore” (v.13) - Zebulun obtains territory between sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea.
Issachar (vv. 14-15)	“a strong donkey” (v. 14)	“Lying down between the sheepfolds” (v. 14) - Issachar would prefer an agricultural way of life rather than political supremacy. His tribe will dwell in lower Galilee, including the rich farm lands of the Jezreel valley.
Dan (vv. 16-18)	“judge” (v.16)	“shall be a serpent in the way” (v.17) - Dan’s prophecy becomes a reality during Samson’s judgeship. Dan’s victories benefited all Israel. This tribe though is led to idolatry (Judg 18) and is similar to “a serpent).
Gad (v. 19)	“raider” (v. 19)	“shall raid at their heels” (v.19) - Gad would be like Dan, effective in battle.
Asher (v.20)	“rich food” (v.20)	“he shall yield royal dainties” (v.20) - Asher would enjoy fruitful soil of the lowlands of Carmel (vineyard) range, north along the Mediterranean coast. This is some of the most fertile land in Canaan.
Naphtali (v.21)	“a doe” (v.21)	“He gives beautiful words” (v.21) - Naphtali would exchange his freedom for a more sedentary domesticated lifestyle in the land to accommodate the Canaanites.
Joseph (vv. 22-26)	“a fruitful bough” (v. 22)	“The blessings of your father have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors” (v.26) - Joseph was abundantly blessed. Two tribes bore his son’s names (Ephraim and Manasseh).
Benjamin (v. 27)	“ravenous wolf” (v.27)	“he devours the prey” (v.27) - Benjamin produced many warriors in Israel’s history and demonstrated warlike character.

- C. **LIVE IT:** Paul tells us that every believer is God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, “*which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*” (Eph. 2.10). Just as the Lord had divinely orchestrated the future of Jacob’s sons tribal history, the Lord also has His handiwork in the lives and future of those who are in Christ Jesus.

III. THE BLESSING OF PEACE AND REST

A. LOOK IT UP: (Read Genesis 49.29-50.26)

1. Where does Jacob want to be buried?
2. How long did it take the Egyptians to embalm Jacob and how long did they mourn for him?
3. What was the Canaanites reaction to Jacob’s funeral?
4. After Jacob’s burial, what were Joseph’s brothers concerned about?
5. What words of comfort did Joseph share with his brother’s?
6. How old was Joseph when he died?

B. LEARN IT:

1. “*...bury me with my fathers...*” (49.29) - Jacob again expresses his faith in God’s promises that Canaan would be the Israelite’s homeland by requesting burial in the “Cave of the field of Machpelah” near Hebron (cf. 23.1-20; 47.29-32;; 48.21-22). If you recall, this becomes the first real-estate purchase that gives citizenship to Abraham and his descendants in the land of Canaan. Ephron wanted to give the land to Abraham [still making Ephron owner] (23.10), but Abraham would not have that, he wanted to purchase the parcel of land with the cave at the going rate. So, for four hundred shekels, Abraham purchased the land and cave from Ephron (23.16).
2. “*...he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last...*” (49.33) - Jacob died peacefully and “*was gathered to his people*” (i.e. reunited with his ancestors, implying life after death in Sheol, the “Place of Departed Spirits” (cf. 25.8). Jacob was 147 years old when he died (47.28).
3. “*And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father...*” (50.2) - When Jacob passed away, verse 1 shows a very tender moment of love and sorrow by Joseph. Then he instructed his servants to preserve Jacob’s body as a mummy. This embalming would require forty days to complete by the Egyptians.
4. “*...the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad*” (50.11) - Jacob’s elaborate funeral was probably due, both to the high regard in which the Egyptians held him as Joseph’s father, and to the Egyptian’s love for showy funeral ceremonies (vv. 7-10). It is the grandest funeral recorded in the Bible, which is entirely appropriate since Jacob’s story spans more than half of Genesis. Verse 3 tells us that the Egyptians mourned for Jacob “seventy days” just two days less than they

normally mourned the death of a Pharaoh. So impressed were the Canaanites that they named the place of Jacob's burial, "Abel-mizaim" which means "Mourning of Egypt" (v.11).

5. *"So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you..." (50.21)* - After Jacob had been buried, Joseph's brothers feared that he would take full vengeance on them *"for all the wrong which we (they) did to him"* (v.15) so they sent Joseph a message saying something like, "Father said for us to tell you that you should forgive us for what we did to you, please forgive us." Jacob might have done that, but more likely it was the old ways of the brothers creeping back to cover and protect themselves. Joseph's response is one that reveals his attitude toward God and them (vv. 18-21; cf. 27.41). He humbled himself under God's authority because Joseph regarded God as sovereign over him, and the One who had providentially guided all the events of his life. He knew that God's purposes for him, his family, and all people were good (cf. chs. 1-2). Thus, he behaved with tender compassion toward his brothers. Joseph proved to be his "brothers' keeper" that Cain could not be (4.9). Therefore, Joseph's words of comfort were, *"you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive"* (v.20).
6. *"So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years..." (50.26)* - Joseph lived to see God's blessing on his children's children. He died 54 years after Jacob's death, when he was 110 years old. Being embalmed in a coffin, Joseph's body would remain in Egypt until the Exodus and would eventually be buried under Abraham's oak (48.22; cf. Josh. 24.32). His burial then would express Joseph's faith in God's promises to his forefathers and provides a fitting climax for the Book of Genesis and the formative period of Israel's history. Verse 24 contains the first reference to the three patriarchs together (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob).

C. LIVE IT: Believers who trust that the Lord will fulfill His promises to bless in His own sovereign ways will demonstrate their faith in the way they die. Mourning is a natural emotion that the Lord has given us all when we lose a loved one to death. That's part of the sting of death we feel. But the Lord has also given us hope for those who trust in Him, this is the believer's victory in Christ (1 Cor. 15.56-57).

Consider the passages below concerning the death of a believer:

1. *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1.21)*
2. *"But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better" (Phil 1.23)*
3. *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me," (Gal. 2.20)*
4. *"My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life." (Ps. 119.50)*
5. *"...we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him..." (1 Thes. 4.13-18)*

6. *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.” (John 14.1-4)*
7. *“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Rev. 21.4).*

CONCLUSION: This concludes the study of the Life of Joseph. As you reflect back on all the studies, consider these questions for application:

1. What are three lessons you learned from Joseph concerning life and faith?
2. What has changed or not changed in your view of God’s providence and sovereign rule over man and nations?
3. How has your walk and faith been strengthened by Joseph’s story?
4. Do you fear death or are you at peace with the hope and expectation of what God has promised through Christ Jesus our Lord?

The only way for one to be able to rest in peace (R.I.P.) is to know the peace of God through Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 5.1). The only way to have this peace is to firmly believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God who died for our sins and rose again three days later giving us the hope and power of a resurrected life that has been redeemed by His saving blood on the cross. All one has to do is call upon the Lord to be saved (Romans 10.9-13).

Trust in Him today and do not delay for today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6.2). Amen!