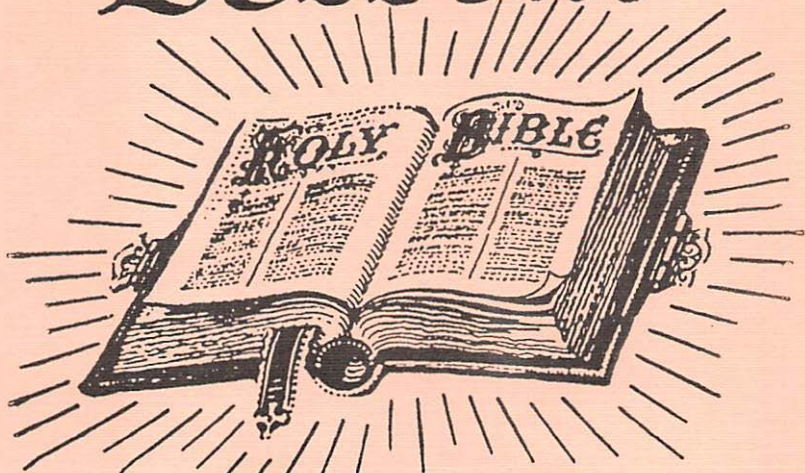


Bible Lessons



**"Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,
we are CHANGED" II Cor. 3:18**

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

**Vol. 27, No. 3
July, Aug., Sept.
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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People
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Volume 27

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No. 3

Table of Contents

DATE	LESSON TITLE	PAGE
July 2	Joseph's Conflict With His Brothers	1
9	Joseph is Sold into Egypt	6
16	Joseph's Prosperity and Temptation	11
23	Joseph's Faithfulness and Success in Prison	15
30	Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dreams	19
Aug. 6	Joseph Appointed Ruler Over Egypt	24
13	Joseph's Brothers Come to Egypt	29
20	Joseph Demands Benjamin, His Brother, to be Brought ..	34
27	Joseph Entertains His Brothers	38
Sept. 3	Joseph Puts His Brothers to the Test	42
10	Joseph Reveals Himself to His Brothers	47
17	Joseph Reunited with His Father	51
24	The Blessing of Joseph	57

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THEME FOR THIRD QUARTER, 1995

We feel inspired and directed of the Spirit of the Lord to put forth a series of lessons for this quarter on the life of Joseph. There are many spiritual lessons to be found in the life story of Joseph, the eleventh son of the patriarch Jacob, besides the heartwarming exposition of the Providential working of the almighty God. It is a very wonderful part of Bible history. Joseph's progress from innocency through tragedy and disappointment to triumph and success can be an inspiration to us today who meet with the woes and reverses of life. To behold how Joseph mastered every situation that he was in and rose to the top despite the adversities and arrows of outrageous injury commands our admiration and respect. The same God that enabled him to come forth triumphantly will help us today in our heartaches and trials of life. The same forces of evil that Joseph fought against are still in the world in our time. The struggles and foolish errors of childhood and youth, the adversities and disappointments suffered on account of others, the mistreatment and injustice so freely given, and the victory over pride and bitterness all are so wonderfully illustrated in this story of Joseph. We pray that the Lord will bless these lessons to the good and encouragement of each Bible student.

—Brother Leslie Busbee

JULY 2, 1995

JOSEPH'S CONFLICT WITH HIS BROTHERS

Genesis 37:2 These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.

4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

7 For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

10 And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

12 And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

13 And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I.

14 And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again....

17 ...And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

18 And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.

19 And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.

20 Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

21 And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him.

22 And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

MEMORY VERSE: Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Ephesians 4:31-32.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Envy and jealousy give way to hatred in the heart of man. And hatred will bring forth murder. This kind of passion can and often does develop toward a totally innocent and harmless person. God will protect and deliver the innocent, but woe be to the one who gives in to this terrible passion.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

(Genesis 37:2), "*Joseph brought unto his father their evil report*": The Hebrew text says, "And Joseph brought their report, an evil one, to their father." The Greek Septuagint text says, "And Joseph brought to Israel their father their evil reproach." From the language of this text it is very evident that Joseph reported to Jacob concerning the activity and behaviour of his brothers, thus helping to begin their resentment that later mushroomed into jealousy and hatred.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Joseph was the son of Jacob's beloved wife, Rachel. He and his brother Benjamin were the youngest of the family, having been born to Jacob in his old age. According to the age of Jacob at the time when he was moved to Egypt, which was 130 years (Gen. 47:9), and the age of Joseph being about 39 years old, the age of Jacob at the birth of Joseph was about 91. These two factors: the mother, Rachel, dying in childbirth with Benjamin, and Joseph being the son of his old age, contrib-

making Joseph and Benjamin very dear and special to Jacob. It also appears that Joseph was a very model child; loving and obedient and devoted to his father. This was shown by Joseph's readiness to obey his father and go on the mission to see about his brethren, even though it could have been a treacherous venture, knowing of their hostile feelings against him. And it is to be noted that Joseph was also very dear to God. The dreams that God gave him were very prophetic of his future importance. The Lord had special plans and purposes for this young man who was so hated and despised by his brothers.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Joseph such a special child to Jacob?
2. In what way did Jacob act unwisely toward Joseph?
3. Did Joseph's brothers have just cause to hate him?
4. Was there any wrong in Joseph telling of his dreams?
5. Did Jacob appear to sense any danger in sending Joseph to see about his brothers?
6. How did Joseph's brothers show that they did not fear God?
7. How did Reuben manifest a better disposition?
8. What were the things about Joseph that were in his favor?
9. How did Jacob feel about Joseph's dreams?
10. How old was Joseph at the time of our lesson?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLES' COMMENTS

None of us asked to come into this world. We are here by Divine Appointment. God put us here and gave us life. And He put us here amid various situations and circumstances. Joseph was born into a family which had ten sons who were older than him. They were all from the same father, but not from the same mother. And there were problems in this sort of arrangement. Joseph's mother, Rachel, was the main object of the love of Jacob's youth. He actually paid for her with fourteen years of labor. And in bearing her second child, dear Rachel had died. Joseph entered into a life encompassed with problems. So do we have problems and difficulties. It is so

important that we take the right attitude in our hearts toward everything and everybody. Joseph's brothers yielded to the wrong spirit in giving over to jealousy and hatred for their brother. Hatred is a very unwise, unmanly and unrighteous passion. It is never right to hate anyone. No matter what they do to us, we must never give way to feelings of hatred and revenge. The world is in the shape that it is in today because of the absence of pure love in the heart. This absence of love gives place to hatred and strife. Hatred gives place to the desire to murder. I John 3:15 states: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer:..." Sister Lizzie Jordan often asked the Lord in her prayers: "Give us that love that hates no man." Hatred works in two destructive ways. It injures the one hated and will destroy the one who hates. No matter what others do, God wants us to have a righteous love for their soul. Love will keep envy, jealousy and hatred out. The turmoil and strife raging in our world are the fruits of hatred and the absence of love.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Several admirable traits of Joseph in our lesson are worth pointing out. First, Joseph had discernment. When he saw his brothers doing wrong he knew it was wrong. The reason he had this discernment was because he possessed a pure heart.

It is common to define as "pure," someone who is without sensual sin, but purity goes much deeper than that. Purity of heart takes in our attitudes. Even attitudes of religious pride taint the soul. All deceitful works of the flesh and hypocrisies of the heart must be crucified. Then the purity of our heart will be attracted by the purity of God in whatever way He manifests Himself.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Matt. 5:8. This is discernment. If we have a pure heart we will know the things that are of God. We will be able to see God in other's lives and actions.

Joseph also commanded himself very well against peer pressure. When he saw the actions of his brothers, it would have been easy to join in. Instead he took a stand against their

wrong, burning all bridges of temptation by relating his brothers' deeds to his father.

Neither is it easy to be in a place of special favor. Jacob preferred Joseph, not necessarily because of anything Joseph had done, but because he was the son of Rachel and the son of Jacob's old age. Joseph triumphed over this situation also. He did not withdraw from his siblings because of his privileged status. When Jacob needed someone to go to where the brothers were in Shechem, Joseph readily consented to be the one.

The world will hate those who have the special favor of being God's children, but there is victory in it. Rather than withdraw from all association, we should seek opportunities to share the blessings there are in Sonship and the invitation that all are invited into this relationship. —Wayne Murphey



JULY 9, 1995

JOSEPH IS SOLD INTO EGYPT

Genesis 37:23 And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him;

24 And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

25 And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

26 And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?

27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.

28 Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

29 And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes.

30 And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?

31 And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood;

32 And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no.

33 And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.

34 And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

35 And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

36 And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.

Psalm 105:16 Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread.

17 He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant:

18 Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron:

19 Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him.

MEMORY VERSE: Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place. Psalm 66:12.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God works beyond our knowledge to fulfill His wise plan for our lives. That adverse situation that brings us so much pain and sorrow is a link in the long chain of His purposes that will be fulfilled in rich blessings later on if we keep our hearts and attitudes right before Him.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

(Genesis 37:28), *"Twenty pieces of silver"*: This would

normally amount to about 12 or 14 dollars in American money, but at our present inflationary rate it would be closer to 100 dollars.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Joseph has been sent by his father to check up on his brothers' welfare. In our previous lesson we see his brothers eyeing Joseph as he is coming toward them. A wicked and murderous plan rose up in their hearts. They began to discuss it among themselves. The oldest brother, Reuben, persuaded them to not kill their brother, but to throw him into a certain pit that they knew of. This he did, hoping to rescue him later and take him home to his father. Think of the anguish and agony of surprise that struck Joseph when his brothers grabbed him, roughly stripped him of his coat, and threw him into the empty pit! And then, with their brother thus disposed of, the sons of Jacob sat down to eat. What hardness of hearts! But the providential hand of God intervened. God was sending Joseph to Egypt. He was separating him from his brethren for a special place to fill. The merchantmen on their way to Egypt passed by and Joseph was sold as a slave to them. Reuben was filled with sorrow when he returned later to the pit and found Joseph gone. He must have evidently been at a good distance from the scene of Joseph's sale not to have known what had taken place. In surveying the account it seems possible that the brothers did not tell Reuben what had happened. To cover up their evil deed they deceived their father with Joseph's coat stained with the blood of a kid goat. Jacob reaped some more of the seed he had sown in his youth, the seed of deception and trickery. He was to pass the next twenty-two years with the mistaken sorrow of the death of his beloved son. But beyond their knowledge God was caring for Joseph, and he was beginning his adventures in the far off land of Egypt.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What caused Joseph's brothers to treat him so wickedly?

2. How was the hardness of their hearts made manifest?
3. By whose arrangement did the merchants pass by them?
4. What caused Judah to suggest sparing Joseph from death?
5. How can we know that God is working in our lives?
6. Does God's working often bring sorrow and pain?
7. Can we afford to look at happenings merely from a human standpoint?
8. Why did Jacob refuse to be comforted?
9. How can this account help us in the sorrows we meet?
10. How did God take care of Joseph?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLES' COMMENTS

There are many sad and hurtful things that come our way, but if we will keep our faith in God above everything He will cause it all to come out all right. God works this way with many of His special people in this world. He brings them into a close and hard place. He lets them tarry in that condition for a time. The temptation comes to be bitter and resentful, angry and frustrated. We are tempted to cast aside our faith and give over to the feelings of despair and bitterness. But we must realize that to do that is sure defeat and failure. To hold on and keep pressing to please the Lord is the most profitable and wise thing to do. Hold steady and be still in your spirit. Learn the great lessons of endurance and faithfulness that your trial and heartache is brought to you for. This is why we must discipline ourselves to walk by faith and not by sight. If we walk by sight, that is, according to the human way of looking at things, we will not see the hand of God at all. We must hold fast to His Word and faithful promises. Learn to make the best of whatever life hands out to you. Learn to take the bad with the good and triumph over it all in love and faith that Christ Jesus gives. Do not expect life to be a flowery bed of ease. It will not be. The flesh is heir to so many wounds and troubles. Especially if you are going to follow the Lord in bearing the cross you can expect your share of sorrow and trouble. But the Lord will be with you and will bless all your distress for good

the Lord beholds your steadfast and cheerful attitude in the midst of your adversities, and He will bless and reward you and bring you out into a wealthy place. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“Who can tell the results of envy and hatred, for who is able to detect all the places they have exercised influence save God? Such attitudes of heart and mind are not hideous monsters that hurl themselves suddenly upon helpless mortals and cause them to perform some awful, evil act on the spur of the moment. No, indeed, we as mortals might be better off if it were that way for they would be more readily identifiable and more effectively resisted. Instead, they slip in very, very slyly, and ever so cunningly do they contrive to cover their presence and hide their true character. Every act they perform and every influence they exert is very carefully justified beforehand, so that their subject will detect no condemnation of conscience and thus discover their presence. They are masters at concealment and past masters at subversion. When we begin to question the motive of an act they have promoted, they immediately indicate to us that the other individual had no right to act as he did and thus deflect our attention away from their activity in us. They creep into hearts and begin to influence lives sometimes from childhood, just as the story in the lesson indicates.

“This event related in the story didn’t just suddenly burst forth and progress to fruition in a matter of a few days. It was the ultimate harvest of long years of maturity and thus heart-ache was just one more added to a long list of accumulated injuries and hurts and sore wounds.

“Oh, how easy it is for a little hatred in a heart to inflict subtle, undercover wounds, designed to injure someone but yet done so subtly until no one else would detect it, or even suspect! Let us be sure that regardless of how cleverly the act is done, God still sees and knows it all and will not overlook.”

—C. W. Wilson (Written in 1971.)



JULY 16, 1995

JOSEPH'S PROSPERITY AND TEMPTATION

Genesis 39:2 And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

3 And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

5 And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

6 And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.

7 And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.

8 But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;

9 There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

10 And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.

11 And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within.

12 And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

16 And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home.

17 And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me:

18 And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.

19 And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled.

20 And Joseph's master took him, and put him into prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

MEMORY VERSE: Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long. Proverbs 23:17.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Every temptation of Satan to allure us from the way of holiness must be resisted steadfastly and shunned no matter what it costs us to be faithful to God.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

(Genesis 39:6), "*Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured*": The Hebrew says, "Joseph was beautiful in form and beautiful in appearance." The Septuagint Greek says, "Joseph was handsome in form and exceedingly beautiful in countenance."

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we have the prosperity of Joseph by the blessings of God put to the test by a temptation of evil. Joseph's resistance to this plot of Satan to ruin his life brought out what a faithful and true man he was. At all cost he would be true to God and what was right. He had great position, power, and responsibility. In gratitude to God and his master he refused to surrender his loyalty. His master's wife for the time being appeared to her husband to be virtuous and faithful while Joseph was accused of immorality and sin, but Joseph knew that God knew what the real score was. He was confident that God would bring him out no matter what happened. It is one of the greatest testimonies of faithfulness

to God that is recorded in holy scripture. Joseph resisted one of the strongest temptations ever presented to man. It cost him dearly, but he came out triumphant because he knew that in his heart he was righteous and clear before God. The ungodly woman who did him so much wrong has faded to nothing but shame and disgrace, but Joseph, in maintaining his integrity before God, ascended to heights of honor and success that have inspired his fellow man ever since —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the reason for Joseph's success with Potiphar?
2. How well did he prosper with Potiphar and his business?
3. Does the Lord want to bless and prosper us today?
4. In what way does the Lord especially want to prosper us?
5. Why must we have to be tempted by evil?
6. What must we do to overcome in the hour of trial?
7. Would we have heard about Joseph had he yielded to sin?
8. What should we think about when tempted with evil?
9. What does resisting temptation in our life bring out?
10. What did it cost Joseph to overcome this temptation?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLES' COMMENTS

Along with the blessings of God and prosperity comes responsibility and temptation. No matter where you are in life and what you are engaged in this is true. To whom much is given is much required. The blessings of God are to be sought after and greatly desired, but one must bear in mind that with the blessings of the Lord there comes great responsibility and the chance to fail. It is very expedient, therefore, and of such great importance for the servant of God to be watchful, temperant and very diligent. We have a foe who is determined to draw us away from the path of life. He is watching us for any weakness or opportunity to take advantage of us. The careless and heedless will not make the grade no matter how much chance and favor is given. "The hand that takes the crown must ache with many a cross." Frances Ridley Havergal. There

must ache with many a cross." Frances Ridley Havergal. There is temptation to pride in positions of honor. There is temptation of revenge in injury or offense. There is temptation of sloth in abundance of wealth and ease. We must constantly be on our guard. We may resist temptation on one line successfully, but beware! Satan will come from another angle of approach. If he can't crush you down he will seek to inflate you. If he can't scare and intimidate you, he will seek to bribe you. If he can't get you to loosen up, he will seek to make you too tight and fanatic. Sometimes the source from which the trial comes may be unexpected. We must be circumspect, watching on every side, always aware that danger is around. Watch the birds as they feed and drink. Their heads come up nearly with every bite, looking in all directions. They know that danger is everywhere and that watchfulness can save their lives. So it is with us who are seeking to serve God. Watch and pray. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." I Peter 5:8.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

When Potiphar's wife said that Joseph had come in unto her to mock her, she was saying that Joseph had tried to put her to shame. Isn't it ironic and strange? She accused Joseph of the type of sin that she had committed. Yet this is commonly how a wrong attitude will work. You've probably seen it happen; someone accusing another person very graphically, and in reality describing their own behavior.

If there is any comfort in being tempted, you might find it in the following description offered by one writer. "Why is it that the Dead Sea has never the 'deep-sounding roar' of the ocean? Because it is dead. Why is it that it is never visited by the flight of gulls, or pelicans, or sea-mews? Why is it that all 'migratory birds sweep over it without even a pause to seek for prey?' Because it is dead. Why is it that the unconverted are not visited with the temptations of the Christian? Because of the same reason." ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ —Wayne Murphey

JULY 23, 1995

JOSEPH'S FAITHFULNESS AND SUCCESS IN PRISON

Genesis 39:21 But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.

23 The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.

Genesis 40:1 And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt.

3 And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound.

4 And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them:... and they continued a season in ward.

6 And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad.

7 And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore lookye so sadly today?

8 And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you.

9 And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before me;

10 And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes:

11 And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand.

12 And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days:

13 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head,

Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler.

14 But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house:

15 For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me in the dungeon.

20 And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

21 And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand:

22 But he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them.

23 Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.

MEMORY VERSE: He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. Luke 16:10.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Wheresoever God in His Providence sees fit to place us in life, whether in lowly or exalted positions, we should look upon everything as a sacred trust from Him and endeavor wholeheartedly to make the best of it all.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

(Genesis 40:1), "*Butler*": A cup bearer, or one in charge of the serving of beverages.

(Genesis 40:3), "*In ward*": In custody.

(Genesis 40:13, 20), "*Lift up thine head*": The Greek Septuagint says, "Remember thy office." It evidently means to restore to one's former rank or position.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we see Joseph rising above his sorrows and disappointments in the success of ministering to others

and serving his God. He could have allowed the misfortune that had befallen him with Potiphar and his wife to have crushed the life out of his spirit. But he refused to do that. He no doubt had strong convictions in his heart that what had befallen him God was going to use for a good purpose. So he rallied his courage and determination to make the best of this situation that he had fallen into. With God's blessings he began to rise to the top. The Lord began to prosper him, and Joseph kept in touch with Heaven and spiritual victory. What a great example he was! His life is a pattern for us today to follow in our lives. Many have made the great mistake to cast away heart and courage to face and accept the challenge of providential workings. They become bitter and resentful, and lose the sweet Spirit of the Lord. In such a condition they are of no value to anyone, but just an addition to the woes of life. But Joseph did not fall into that trap. He rose up with fierce determination to win, and he did. The Spirit of the Lord blessed his manly soul, and gave him understanding to discern the mysteries of life and he became the Lord's interpreter. Oh, how the Lord needs faithful men and women today who will not be defeated by the reverses of life, but who will triumph in living faith! Instead of being bitter and melancholy of spirit, let us believe that our misfortunes are God's appointments, and that they are to be triumphed over through steadfast love and faith in Christ.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the Lord enable Joseph to do in the prison?
2. What was Joseph's attitude toward what had befallen him?
3. What if Joseph had become bitter and resentful?
4. Can we rightfully count all that happens to us as the Providential working of God for our good?
5. Can we count it all good even if it does not seem good?
6. Is it possible for us to prosper even as Joseph did?
7. What must we do in order to succeed and prosper as he did?
8. Why did Joseph put in a plea for the butler to make mention of him before Pharaoh?

9. Would you consider the butler forgetting about Joseph as the worst disappointment thus far?

10. Could we rightfully say that God caused the butler to forget about Joseph?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLES' COMMENTS

There are times in each one of the lives of God's children when God takes special moves to work out some special purpose that He has for them and for His cause. God IS a God of circumstances. We must count it so that all things work together for good to us if we are sincerely following the Lord's will with all of our hearts. It is easy to accept this when blessings and pleasant things come our way. We are ready to accept them as special benefits from the hand of God. But when reverses and misfortunes come there is an inclination in the human part of us to begin to wonder and doubt that such is God's doing. But a good look and reminder of Bible accounts like that of Joseph will show that God is in the misfortunes and adversities that come our way. And when they come again and again, we can still count them as for our good. We may not see it at the present time, but we know that further down the road of life it will prove out to be a blessing. First Joseph was sold as a slave by his brothers. This was a bitter cup to drink. But then came the unjust accusation and imprisonment. Joseph was suffering then for the sake of righteousness. In both of these trials Joseph rose triumphantly above it all. But the third trial fell when the butler failed to heed Joseph's plea for a word with Pharaoh. A ray of hope flashed in Joseph's heart as he thought of the butler standing before Pharaoh again, making mention of him. But the days came and went and no word came. No call or summons to deliver him from the dungeon came to fulfill his bleeding heart. A year went by, and then two years went by. Those were days when it seemed all hope had faded. It just looked like he would be in that prison for the rest of his days. And so the burdens of life appear to us sometimes. But let us not give over to melancholy or despair. Keep looking up. God is working out His purpose. He has not forgotten to be gracious as it may seem. The darkest hour is so often just before the dawn.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The story of Joseph is an outstanding example of the providence of God. In our day to day activity of living we fail to remember just how much control God has over what happens. The rapidity and extent of the changes in Joseph's life are probably greater than what any of us will ever experience. One day he was the pride of his father, the next a slave in a foreign house. He then became master of another man's home with the freedom to do whatever he chose, and scarcely had time to acclimate to this position of power before landing in prison as a common criminal, charged with a humiliating crime. Naturally he longed to be free, so he probed every opportunity to win his release. Upon this miraculous event, he found himself established in the seat of great authority. What a roller coaster ride in living!

Serving the Lord and trusting ourselves to the providence of God is the only worthwhile way to spend life, though there are times of ill treatment, false accusations and crosses to bear. Whether we are up or down, God is with His children, guiding the events that they face.

There is one intended end to the providence of God, and that is to take each of us to heaven and glorify the name of the Lord along the way. When we reach the place He has prepared for us, we will discover a greater high than we ever imagined and spending eternity in the light of His love means there will be no more disappointments.

—Wayne Murphéy



JULY 30, 1995

JOSEPH INTERPRETS PHARAOH'S DREAMS

Genesis 41:1 And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed:...

8 And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

9 Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day:

10 Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker.

12 And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret.

14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.

15 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.

16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

17 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river:

18 And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fattished and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow:

19 And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness:

20 And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine:

21 And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke.

22 And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good:

23 And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprang up after them:

24 And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told this unto the magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me.

25 And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.

26 The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one.

27 And the seven thin and ill favoured *kine* that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

28 This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

29 Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

30 And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land;

31 And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous.

32 And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

MEMORY VERSE: A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished. Proverbs 22:3.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God is faithful to forewarn us concerning trouble and adversity so that we can prepare ourselves. We must take heed to the warnings in His precious Word that will help us have a good foundation against the time to come that we may lay hold on eternal life.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

(Genesis 41:18), "*Kine*": Female cattle, or cows.

(Genesis 41:25-26), "*The dream is one*": Both dreams are pointing to one and the same meaning.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For two years Joseph had been seemingly shut out and forgotten in the dungeon. "Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him. The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: To bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom." Psalm 105:19-22. God willed that the nation of Israel would be

in Egypt for a period of time where they would grow into a strong and powerful nation. So He planned to send a famine upon the earth in order to get His people into Egypt. He sent Joseph down to Egypt by having his brothers sell him as a slave. He took him through the depths of trial to prepare him for the great responsibility of preserving humanity through the terrible famine. His timing called for a space of about two years when Joseph would be seemingly forgotten. But "the time of his word" finally came. The famine was foreseen and foretold in Pharaoh's dreams, and the forgetful and ungrateful butler was reminded of his fault in forgetting Joseph. Joseph interpreted the king's dreams and stood ready to offer the counsel that must be carried out to save the world from death and starvation.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Pharaoh's dreams foretell?
2. What did the double dream indicate?
3. What kind of famine was predicted?
4. What would have happened to humanity if no warnings or preparations had been made concerning the famine?
5. How was Joseph prepared for this great responsibility?
6. In what ways can Joseph be compared to Jesus Christ?
7. Are there famines that we must meet in our lives?
8. Why were Joseph's hard trials so necessary to prepare him for the great work in store for him?
9. Why was Pharaoh so willing to hear Joseph?
10. Name some of the qualities of Joseph that you admire.

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLES' COMMENTS

Psalm 105:16 says that God "called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread." The "staff of bread" means the support of bread, or the means of supplying food. The means of supplying food is the cultivation and production of grain and fruit for human consumption. God called for a famine that would break the entire support and provision for food. He had different reasons for doing this. Many famines have occurred in the history of the world. They have a way of humbling the sons of men. God suffered Israel to hunger in the

wilderness. He causes people to move and change locations in time of famine. Abraham went down to Egypt when a famine was in Canaan. In the 107th Psalm there are several famine situations mentioned that brought people down to poverty and a sense of their need of God's help and deliverance. Amos 8:11 mentions a spiritual famine of hearing the words of the Lord. Now that is a really serious famine. The world today is famine struck in a spiritual sense. It is not because the Word of the Lord is not here or available, but it is that the hearts of men are so lustful and proud and blinded to the Word of the Lord. Surely we need the Lord Jesus Christ to save us and to take us through this world of famine and spiritual drought. So let us draw near to the Lord and look to Him for help and deliverance from the evils of this wicked world. He will feed us and sustain us just as Joseph proved Him able to do in his time. We are His brethren, and have been reconciled to Him by His faithfulness to God and His pure righteousness. He will take us through the hard trials of this life and will share His eternal Home with us when this earth is no more.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There are some people who put great stock in dreams, and there are others who consider them worthless. Shakespeare once said, "Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls." The quote, "Children of the night, of indigestion bred," is accredited to Winston Churchill.

There have been plenty of people who would take issue with this lack of credence to dreams. The English poet, Joanna Baillie once wrote, "Dreams full oft' are found of real events the forms and shadows." Thomas Browne, a physician, takes it a step further when he says, "We are somewhat more than ourselves in our sleeps, and the slumber of the body seems to be but the waking of the soul...."

We would be in a real bind to read something into all our dreams, but it would also be unwise to blind ourselves to an avenue through which God can work. In the Old Testament God seemed to use dreams often to get a message to the people,

and still He tries to awaken souls to their spiritual needs through such a means.

Today, in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, we need more than just the ability to interpret dreams. We need to know the voice of God. If we are acquainted with the voice of God, and are accustomed to His dealings with man, we might find quite a message where others find none. Bro. Clifford Wilson has said, "God sounded from heaven on one occasion and declared Jesus to be His own Son, but some who stood by thought it thundered! Oh! what a vast difference there is between the voice of the great God of heaven, teaching and instructing, and the vague rumble of thunder in the ears! May God help us to live where we can distinguish clearly."

—Wayne Murphey



AUGUST 6, 1995

JOSEPH APPOINTED RULER OVER EGYPT

Genesis 41:33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

36 And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

37 And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

42 And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;

43 And made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.

46 And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

47 And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.

48 And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same.

49 And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number.

50 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came,...

51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

MEMORY VERSE: ...For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Luke 18:14.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: All the bitter trials of adversity will prepare us for the great blessings and responsibilities of the service that God wants us to render for His cause and the souls of men.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

(Genesis 41:33,39), "*Discreet and wise*": The word "discreet" is translated from the Hebrew word which is often

translated "understanding." It means to be able to separate or mentally distinguish, that is, to understand. It goes with the word "wise" in the ability to know how to handle matters wisely and conduct one's self for the best benefit and advantage.

(Genesis 41:47), "*By handfuls*": A term meaning plentifully, without scarcity or measure.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson Joseph gave Pharaoh the interpretation of his dreams which foretold seven prosperous years of bountiful harvests to be followed by seven years of famine. Joseph knew that seven years of such a severe famine would destroy the human race unless proper steps for preparation were taken. God gave him discernment to know that only by storing and laying by in the time of plenty would the years of famine be successfully endured. It is an understood plan of economy and management to provide substance in store for time when food cannot be gathered. Grain is harvested in abundance with thought for the rainy and winter seasons when no food is gathered. A great famine was foretold and Joseph was much persuaded that God had given the warning. So the counsel he gave to Pharaoh laid out a plan for survival. Someone had to take charge of this operation, this important work of preparing for the famine. Perhaps Joseph had no thought that the great responsibility would fall upon his shoulders. But when it did, he was ready. He was adapted to this great task just as he had been to the work he had previously been in for the past thirteen years. With this responsibility came blessings of honor and happiness. Now Joseph was being rewarded for all his sorrow and toil.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of man was needed to direct the work of preparing for the famine?
2. What was going to have to be done to be ready for the famine?
3. Why did Pharaoh believe that Joseph was the man for the task of making ready for the famine?

4. How much authority and power did Pharaoh give to Joseph?
5. What honor did Pharaoh give to Joseph?
6. How old was Joseph when this great work was given to him?
7. What part did Joseph's faith in God have in his work?
8. What did the names of Joseph's two sons mean to him?
9. What kind of fruit did Joseph bear in the land of his affliction?
10. What lessons for our own lives can we draw from all of this?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLES' COMMENTS

We must all be aware that God is a God of blessings and rewards. But He wants His blessings to mean something to us. He wills that His rewards be so special and precious to us. And the way He has for that to be is through the bitter and hard experiences that He allows us to pass through. There are dispositions and attitudes of heart and mind that God wants to work into us. We might be pure and sincere before God, but we will need adversity to temper and soften the spirit so that we can handle the responsibility that God is bringing us to. James 1:2-4 wisely counsels us: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers (or various) temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." There are spiritual qualities for us to have that can only be acquired through patience and the enduring of stressful adversities. A person who has everything easy and pleasing to the flesh will as a general rule be shallow and unstable. It takes the winds of adversity to make the roots of a person's character go deep. It is so important to bear suffering and misfortune in the right way. And that is with faith and submission to the will of God. We must believe that our trials are not just happenings or chance, but that they are the providential workings of God for a wholesome and wise purpose. All the great figures in the Bible who were used of the Lord for His holy purpose illustrate this. And it will be true with

each one of us. Let us take lessons from the life of Joseph and so yield to God that His divine pleasure will be fulfilled in us as it was in him.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Sudden elevations are often the precursors of sudden falls. It was not so with Joseph. He filled satisfactorily his position, retaining it to the end of life. He made himself indispensable to Pharaoh and to the country. He was a man of decision. Seeing what had to be done, he hesitated not in commencing it. Doubtless he felt the weight upon him, but he directed his attentions to the tasks at hand and not to the height of his position. Although a ruler of Egypt, he was still Joseph and though we will never attain the height of rulership that he did, Joseph's example of remaining true to himself and to God is a challenge for us.

"And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house." The laurels and prestige Joseph received compensated for the suffering he had endured. He found himself much more comfortably situated than if he had been able to remain in Canaan. This does not mean that his affection for his father was dead, or that his heart of forgiveness had cut off his brothers.

Joseph lived his life in Egypt, the Bible telling us in different places of how he adapted himself to the customs of the Egyptians, even to their religious system, but his faith in God never left him. Though outwardly he appeared Egyptian, at the end of life he "gave commandment concerning his bones." Joseph revealed that he was an Israelite in heart and that his faith in God was unchanged by all he had experienced.

—Wayne Murphey



AUGUST 13, 1995

JOSEPH'S BROTHERS COME TO EGYPT

Genesis 41:53 And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended.

54 And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

55 And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.

56 And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.

57 And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.

Genesis 42:1 Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another?

2 And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.

3 And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt.

4 But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him.

5 And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

6 And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth.

7 And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food.

8 And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.

9 And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed

of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

10 And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come.

11 We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are not spies.

12 And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

13 And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.

14 And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies:

15 Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither.

16 Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies.

17 And he put them all together into ward three days.

MEMORY VERSE: Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Galatians 6:7.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Although Joseph recognized his brothers when they came before him to buy corn, he refrained from making himself known to them before he had proven them to be changed from the heartless and cruel men that they once were.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The first part of Pharaoh's dreams and Joseph's prophecy had come to pass. There were seven years of plenteousness in Egypt. But during that abundant time Joseph had been busily engaged in storing up huge amounts of grain in massive storehouses. What a blessing it is that God gave to man the various grains that can be preserved in dry storage! There are

various grains that can be preserved in dry storage! There are corn, soybeans, wheat, rye, barley and the various beans and peas. All are high quality foods, very nourishing and tasty. With these vast amounts of grain in store and deposited in safe places under the watchful jurisdiction of Joseph and his officers, the land of Egypt was ready for the great seven year dearth. But the famine not only raged in Egypt. "The famine was so sore in all lands." In the land of Canaan the famine raged and Jacob commissioned his ten sons to go down to Egypt to buy food. What a surprise awaited these men! Besides the usual, fearful experience of going to a strange land for purchasing food they ran into a real problem with the governor who was overseeing the selling of the corn. He seemed very critical and unkind and inconsiderate. But little did they know that it was all a disguise and they were soon to come face to face with that brother they had hated and sold into Egypt over twenty years ago!

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Pharaoh do when the people cried to him for food?
2. How far-reaching was the famine?
3. Why did the brothers look at one another when they heard that there was corn in Egypt?
4. Why did Jacob not send Benjamin with them to Egypt?
5. How did Joseph's brothers approach him?
6. Why did the brothers not recognize Joseph?
7. How did Joseph make himself to appear to be to them?
8. What demand did Joseph make of them?
9. What was Joseph hiding?
10. What did the brothers say about their brother Joseph?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLES' COMMENTS

I would be disposed to believe that Joseph was expecting his brothers from Canaan to show up one day, especially since about all the world was beating a path to his door. When their turn came to come in before the governor of Egypt they all ten came bowing before Joseph with their faces to the earth. Joseph recognized them at once. Nearly twenty-two years had

passed since he had seen them. At that time he had suffered at their hands, numbing emotional injury and grief. They had sold him as a slave. Perhaps he had wondered how they faced up to their father when they returned without him. He remembered his dreams when he saw them bowing before him. They had no thought whatsoever of who he really was. He noticed that Benjamin was not among them. He decided to play it tough and test them to see if they had changed any from the wicked and ruthless men they were twenty-two years ago when they treated him so spitefully. He leveled an accusation against them, alleging that they were spies, having come to see the desolation of the land. See the brothers bowing down and pleading their case. They were in a close place. Their guilty consciences smiting them in remembering how they treated Joseph, they now trembled with fear. Try to imagine what all went through their minds as they sat in the prison for three days! Did they pray? I am sure that they did. They were in trouble and they knew not how it was going to come out. They did not realize that the governor they were dealing with was their long lost brother. Some stormy waves would sweep over their souls ere they were granted knowledge of the real truth.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“ ‘And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.’ Gen. 41:55. If Pharaoh had any doubts as to the wisdom of Joseph’s proposal during the seven years of plenty, assuredly he had none now. With a famishing population all around him, what could Pharaoh have done, how averted the destruction of his people, and possibly the overthrow of his own dynasty, if it had not been for the prudent forethought of Joseph? Happy are the kings who have wise men in their kingdoms, and who, when they have them, can trust them.

“ ‘And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.’ Gen.

41:56. If it be asked why Joseph did not gratuitously distribute Pharaoh's corn among the perishing multitudes, the reply is obvious. In all probability the grain had been previously purchased from the people. The people had been warned of the impending calamity and might have exercised a little of the forethought of Joseph and by care and economy provided for the day of want. To have given the corn gratuitously would have resulted in a too lavish distribution, and for the most part to the greedy and the prodigal rather than to the really necessitous. By affixing to it a price, the people were encouraged as long as possible to practice frugality and preserve independence.

"Wise governors will be slow in making paupers of their subjects. It enabled Joseph by a judicious husbanding of resources to extend the circle of relief to the starving populations of other countries who came to him to purchase corn."

—Taken from writings by Thomas Whitelaw




Expiration Notice

If your subscription expired with this quarter, please send your renewal at once. It is necessary that your subscription for the fourth quarter of 1995 be in this office by September 1. For your convenience there is an order blank at the back of this book.

We trust that these Sunday School books and the lessons they contain will be an inspiration by helping to open up just a few of the hidden mysteries of our majestic God.

Bible Lessons



"Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are CHANGED . . ." II Cor. 3:18

ADULTS — YOUNG PEOPLE

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**JOSEPH DEMANDS BENJAMIN,
HIS BROTHER, TO BE BROUGHT**

Genesis 42:18 And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God:

19 If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses:

20 But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.

21 And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.

22 And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.

23 And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.

24 And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

25 Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them.

26 And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence.

29 And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them; saying,

30 The man, who is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country,

33 And ...said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your households, and be gone:

34 And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are true men: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffick in the land.

35 And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that,

behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.

36 And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.

37 And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again.

38 And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

MEMORY VERSE: ...The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders. Deuteronomy 33:12.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: With their brother Simeon left behind in prison, and heavy with the sentence to bring their youngest brother Benjamin with them when they came back to Egypt, the sons of Jacob came home to face a dismayed father.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

(Genesis 42:34), "*Ye shall traffick in the land*": To trade or do business.

LESSON BACKGROUND

After keeping the brothers in prison for three days, Joseph finally decided to keep one of them in prison and let the rest return home with a charge to not come again unless Benjamin was with them. Here he is putting endangered members of the family on either end of the crisis. To not return means to lose Simeon, and to return means to endanger Benjamin away from his father. It is interesting to note the brothers' conversation in the presence of Joseph, not realizing that he could understand what they were saying. They were recalling their

unmercifulness to their brother while Reuben reminded them how he had tried to stop them. This touched Joseph very deeply, but he refrained himself and went ahead with his plan. As our lesson reveals, the brothers met a solid wall when they told their father that the lord of Egypt demanded them to bring Benjamin back with them. "All these things are against me," said Jacob. But in reality, all these things were FOR him. Beyond their human sight the sovereign will and purpose of God was unfolding. Yes, it was working right on schedule, bringing them all to a happy and blessed climax.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Joseph decide to let them all return but one?
2. Why did he keep Simeon in prison?
3. How did Joseph see that the brothers' consciences were smiting them?
4. Why did they not think Joseph understood what they said?
5. How did what they said among themselves affect Joseph?
6. For what reason did Joseph restore each man his money?
7. Why did they think that God had done this to them?
8. What was Jacob's reaction to the idea of Benjamin accompanying them on their next journey to Egypt?
9. What did Reuben offer to Jacob, and why?
10. Why was Jacob fearful of letting Benjamin go?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLES' COMMENTS

Many times in life, as is illustrated in our lesson about Joseph, the divine purpose of God is working in wonderful ways, but it is beyond our human sight. He is using adverse and difficult conditions to better and forward His cause for His children. Jacob's assertion, "All these things are against me," could not have been farther from the real truth. In reality, all those things were working together for good to him and everyone concerned. It was because there were things going on

that he was not aware of. He had no idea that Joseph was still alive. He did not know that his God was providing a special refuge from the famine for him and his posterity. For twenty-two years he had been persuaded that Joseph was dead, having been slain by a wild beast. The brothers had lived all this time with their injustice to Joseph on their consciences. They knew that they had sold him into Egypt, but they did not dream that he was the obstinate governor that had given them so much trouble. So we see that God was working beyond their human sight. God still works beyond human sight today. If we look at things merely from a human, or even from a material standpoint, we will fail to see the workings of God. All things will seem to be against us. We must be sure that we are really doing all we know to do that pleases God. No man can count on God working out His purpose when he is foolishly living in a way that does not please God. God is working out His purpose all right anyway, no matter what we do, but we will not benefit by it if we are not living a life that pleases Him. Joseph's brothers were changed and repentant men. This helped bring about the happy conclusion to this wonderful story. Beyond Joseph's sight God worked out His wise purpose, changed his wrathful brothers and brought him to a place of great service to humanity.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Our lesson indicates that Joseph still had a tender heart. As he heard his brothers discuss how they were having to pay for the injustice they had committed against him, he turned aside and wept. And his tears were not from the remembrance of his ill treatment. Many people can be moved by self-pity, which isn't to be confused with a tender heart. Joseph was affected by what his brothers were experiencing.

Joseph could have become hardened with hatred from the injustices inflicted upon him. But if he had allowed ill-feelings to rule, it would have limited his ability to help his brothers. This is a thought that should guide us in all our dealings with others. We never know how in the future God may desire to use us to be of help to someone who has done us a wrong.

Joseph was very wise as he dealt with his brothers. Perhaps you wonder why he proved them to see if they were still the envious and jealous brethren he had known them to be. If he had determined they were the same, I am convinced he would have allowed them to purchase the grain and return to Canaan without revealing his identity. Because of his tender heart he desired a family relationship, but did not put himself in a position to be spurned and hurt by his brethren again. In every situation of life we must stay tender, but God does not require us to constantly put ourselves in a situation to be taken advantage of. It requires wisdom in life to know how to conduct ourselves, but God is able to lead us in the way He would have us to go. Thus, we can be a blessing to others, as well as have inner peace. —Wayne Murphey



AUGUST 27, 1995

JOSEPH ENTERTAINS HIS BRETHREN

Genesis 43:8 And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones.

9 I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever:

11 And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds:

12 And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight:

13 Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man:

14 And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.

15 And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.

16 And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon.

23 ...And he brought Simeon out unto them.

24 And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender.

26 And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth.

27 And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?

28 And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance.

29 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son.

30 And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there.

31 And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread.

33 And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another.

34 And he took and sent messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him.

MEMORY VERSE: Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:20-21.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Forgiveness and humility in the heart of a person will cause him to seek to do good to those who have wronged him. Expressions of love, mercy, and good will are the best weapons for one to use in the battles of life.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

(Genesis 43:11), "*Balm*": An oily and fragrant extract substance taken from certain trees and shrubs used for healing and soothing of pain.

(Genesis 43:24), "*Proviender*": Fodder, or food.

(Genesis 43:34), "*Messes*": Special portions or gifts of food.

LESSON BACKGROUND

As we learned in our previous lesson, Jacob at first stubbornly refused to even consider letting Benjamin go with the brothers on their return trip to Egypt. Even Reuben's rash offer of sacrificing his two sons as surety seemed to have no bearing. But as the days went by and the food supply dwindled, Jacob urged his sons to go again to Egypt and buy some more food. But they reminded him that the lord of Egypt had said that they could not see his face again unless their younger brother was with them. It seemed that Judah's suggestion and offer to be a surety for Benjamin helped at that point. At any rate, Jacob finally consented to allow Benjamin to go. Taking with them double money and some special gifts to offer as a present to the governor, the brothers set out again for Egypt. What a surprise met them when they found out they were invited to the governor's house for a feast! Joseph came in at noon. Try to imagine Joseph's emotions and feelings as he looked upon his beloved brother Benjamin! It was probably all he could do to keep from taking him into his arms. Hastening to his room he gave way to great weeping. Returning he had the men placed in the order of their ages, much to his brothers' wonder and amazement. To Benjamin he sent five times as much food from his table. He was probably wanting to see if there was any jealousy to be manifested in the others when they saw their younger brother thus favoured, remembering how jealous they had been of him in the past.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Judah offer to do concerning the safe return of Benjamin?

2. In what way is Jesus made a surety for us?
3. Why did Jacob want to send a special present?
4. What did Joseph want to do when he saw Benjamin?
5. Why did he refrain himself?
6. What made the brothers marvel to each other?
7. Why did Joseph send five times as much food to Benjamin?
8. What was Joseph wanting to find out about his brothers?
9. How important is repentance in us today?
10. Who are the ones who are "beloved" in God's sight?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLES' COMMENTS

There is something about separation that works wonderful benefits in the hearts of men. This is true in the case of those who love each other. Separation is hard, but God uses separation to make more wonderful the bonds of love. We are separated from our Lord by the veil of the flesh. Jesus is at the right hand of God, veiled from our human sight. Yet His love leaps over the bounds of mortal sight and blends with our spirits and we do this with Him, also. Our dearly beloved saints and loved ones who have gone on to that better home above are made more precious to us by their separation from us. Our hearts are filled with intense yearning to be with them again. But we must bear the separation until that great day of reunion. There is an old saying, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." It is true. We as the saints of God are separated by time and space so much of the time. But it is so precious when we are granted those special seasons of being together. In the story of Joseph we find him by the providence of God separated from his brethren and father for about twenty-two years. God had an important work for him to do and he had to single him out and separate him from his brethren to get him prepared and in a place to do this great work. Separation is painful, but is often the providence of God to make the bonds of love sweeter and greater. Someday the long night of this world will be ended. The dawning of eternal joys will break and all the saints of God and their Saviour will be joined in one

happy throng to enjoy each other forever and ever. Let us be faithful to Him now in this corruptible body, live by faith, keep His way and pray always that we will be accounted worthy to stand before Him some blessed day in eternity.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Joseph was a perfect host. His brothers had many reasons to believe they would be ill-treated. We won't take the space to enumerate every instance, but there were many ways that Joseph put them at ease. By the time dinner ended, they were making merry.

It is a glory to God if we are good hosts to others. It is done by small actions. And we don't fall into these traits. They come from a sensitive heart, one seeking to please.

The apostle Paul, in writing to Titus, set forth guidelines for the elderly widows who were to be supported by the Church. "Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." I Timothy 5:10. These are things all of us should practice. It all emanates from a heart of love. Love is what will cause us to try to please and make the effort to put others at ease.

—Wayne Murphey



SEPTEMBER 3, 1995

JOSEPH PUTS HIS BROTHERS TO THE TEST

Genesis 44:1 And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth.

2 And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

3 As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses.

4 And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far

off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?

6 And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words.

7 And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing:

8 Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold?

9 With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen.

10 And he said, Now also let it be according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless.

11 Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack.

12 And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

13 Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city.

14 And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he was yet there: and they fell before him on the ground.

16 And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found.

17 And he said, God forbid that I should do so: but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

18 Then Judah came near unto him, and said, O my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh.

30 ...When I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life;

31 It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the

gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave.

32 For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever.

33 Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.

34 For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.

MEMORY VERSE: I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. Jeremiah 17:10.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Joseph's brothers manifested beyond all question that they were changed from the men they once were, that they were repentant for the way they had treated Joseph and his father, and that now they would not do evil to their brother at any cost.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

(Genesis 44:30), "*His life is bound up in the lad's life*": The Hebrew says, "His soul is bound to his (Benjamin's) soul." The Greek Septuagint says, "His life depends on the lad's life."

LESSON BACKGROUND

Joseph's brothers without a doubt were all leaving Egypt that day with light and happy hearts. All the clouds of gloom were dispelled, they were all together, and they were free to go home to their families unafraid. Oh, how glad they were to get away from Egypt. But what is this? Yonder comes someone overtaking them. It is the steward of the lord of Egypt. Here the cup of bliss is dashed from their lips. Their rejoicing is silenced to despair again. Stunned at the accusation of having a thief in their midst, they freely submit to being examined. Think of their horror when the missing cup is found in Benjamin's sack! Think of Benjamin's agony of spirit. See them, plunged into sorrow and despair, turn back to the city and fall down

into sorrow and despair, turn back to the city and fall down before the waiting ruler. Here the test is given. Will they do as they did twenty-two years before, willingly let their brother remain in Egypt while they go home? Will they bring another pang to the sorrow of their beloved father? Judah puts forth his plea. He rehearses the events that brought Benjamin to Egypt. Joseph listens while his older brother begs for clemency for Benjamin, offering to take his place and let him go back to his father. Joseph sees what he was wanting to see, a repentant and loving bunch of men who are united in their love for their younger brother and father. All questions and doubts are settled. He is ready to reveal Himself to them. Oh, what a wonderful and beautiful scene! It is one of the most touching and inspiring scenes in the Bible. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was Joseph really wanting to make sure about his brothers?
2. Why is repentance so important in salvation from sin?
3. Is it possible for a person to repent if he is not conscious of his sin?
4. Is it possible for a person to be saved if he does not repent with godly sorrow?
5. Besides being sorry for having sinned, what else does true repentance cause a person to do?
6. What really made it clear to Joseph that his brothers HAD changed?
7. Had Joseph truly forgiven in his heart his brothers' sin?
8. Were Joseph's actions toward his brothers right?
9. Why was Judah willing to be a servant in Benjamin's place?
10. What was Jacob's feeling for Benjamin?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLES' COMMENTS

God has ways of working with people that are past finding out. We must never give up praying for and carrying a concern for souls no matter how difficult and hopeless they may seem to be. It may take years to bring a soul to repentance. But God is very long suffering and patient. As we pray and keep a loving

granting repentance unto them. There will be some who will obstinately hold out against the Truth unto the end, but not without ample time and chance which is promised to all. God is faithful to deal with every soul. The soul that being often reprov'd and still hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy. (Proverbs 29:1.) God endures with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction so that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy. (Romans 9:22-23.) God searches and tries the reins of the hearts of men. He speaks once, yea, twice, in dreams and visions of the night, opening the ears of men, sealing their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. (Job 33:14-17.) God works so often beyond our comprehension. A person may do us wrong and we feel the weight of the injury. Then that person may be separated from us and the Spirit of God will begin to work with him. We may not know what is going on, but let us not doubt the workings of God. He is working. He will not force the issue, but He will work and give every opportunity and help that is needed. "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." Rev. 3:9. Let us keep praying for the Lord to turn people around and show love and mercy to them at every opportunity that presents itself.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

False accusation is not an easy thing to bear. Joseph's brothers had dined with him, enjoyed his hospitality, and begun the journey back home with the contentment of seeing a way out of their problems. That's when trouble overtook them. What a shock it must have been to discover the silver cup exposed in Benjamin's sack! There were several ways they could have reacted to this. If the brothers were of the same disposition they were of when they sold Joseph into Egypt, they could have disowned Benjamin and allowed him to suffer the full penalty of the false accusation. But they were different now. They felt a loyalty to their father and to their brother.

False accusations can be hard to fight, for evidence sometimes can look very convincing. Benjamin had both an opportunity and a motive. He had just dined with Joseph where the cup could have been stolen, and they were all in need of finances since they had found it necessary to buy grain in Egypt to take back to their families. What mental anguish they must have suffered, yet they held true in the midst of it. They did nothing foolish, but humbled themselves before Joseph.

Our Savior knew the weight of false accusations, even those which seemed plausible to an entire crowd in Pilot's hall. But in the end, God brought Him out from under that cloud, for even the Roman soldier had to admit, "...Truly this man was the Son of God." Mark 15:39. God can do this for us if we will keep humble in the midst of trial, but let us also be cautious about readily accepting every accusation against our brother that might appear credible. —Wayne Murphey



SEPTEMBER 10, 1995

JOSEPH REVEALS HIMSELF TO HIS BRETHREN

Genesis 45:1 Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

2 And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

6 For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

9 Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not:

10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:

11 And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

12 And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you.

13 And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.

14 And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

15 Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

21 ...And Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way.

23 And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way.

24 So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.

MEMORY VERSE: O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Romans 11:33.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: After Joseph was finally convinced that his brothers were changed from the evil men that they were, he made himself known to them, and urged them to take

word to his father and to bring all their families and possessions down to Egypt to live and be nourished from the famine.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

(Genesis 45:6), "*Neither be earing nor harvest*": The Hebrew says "no plowing and harvest." The Septuagint says "no ploughing nor mowing."

(Genesis 45:24), "*See that ye fall not out by the way*": The Hebrew says, "Do not quarrel along the way." The Septuagint says, "Be not angry by the way."

LESSON BACKGROUND

The time had come for Joseph to reveal who he really was to his brothers. It was a moment he had wept and yearned for, and it was such a sacred and special experience to him that he ordered everyone else out of the area. Weeping so loudly that the house of Pharaoh heard him, Joseph proclaimed to the troubled and distressed men before him that he was Joseph, their long lost brother. They were speechless and greatly troubled as they stood in his presence. And no wonder that they were! Their cruel treatment came afresh to their minds, and they wondered what was coming to them from this powerful figure who was saying that he was their brother. But after Joseph got through explaining the situation and his forgiveness toward them and his faith that God was in the whole thing, he and his brother Benjamin just melted in each other's arms. Then Joseph approached each brother and kissed them affectionately and wept upon each one. This broke the ice and the brothers were able to speak with him. Oh, what a touching scene! The fame of this glorious moment was told to Pharaoh and his household, causing them to all rejoice. Oh, how they all loved Joseph! He was their saviour and friend! Pharaoh sent word to Joseph to have his brethren go and bring his father and their households to Egypt where they would be granted the good and the fat of the land. He offered wagons and whatever else was needed. To each of the brothers Joseph gave changes of raiment, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of raiment.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Joseph order all others out from his presence?
2. Why were the brothers troubled at his presence?
3. What did Joseph believe God had sent him to Egypt for?
4. What comparisons can you make with Joseph and Christ?
5. Why did Joseph want his brothers to move to Egypt?
6. What did Joseph give his brothers?
7. What did Joseph send for his father?
8. What are the blessings Christ Jesus sends to us?
9. What does Christ desire concerning us and heaven?
10. What did Joseph caution his brothers about on their way?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLES' COMMENTS

There does not appear ever to have been any revengeful feeling in Joseph's breast toward his brothers. He seems to have kept his heart free from any trace of bitterness and full of sweet, gentle love through the years. When his brothers bowed before him, and he had them in his power, all his old affection for them revived. He forgave them completely. He took them to the old place in his love. He confessed them as his brothers before the king. He had them come and live close beside him, and nourished them with affectionate tenderness.

Surely it is a beautiful picture—Joseph loving and blessing those who had sought to kill him, who had caused him years of sorrow. It is more than a mere human sweetness and gentleness of heart that does this. Centuries before Christ came to teach the world the blessedness of forgiving, before the cross was raised up, before the gospel was written, Joseph had learned the whole lesson. How? He must have lived close to the heart of God all those years, and thus he became the interpreter of the divine forgiveness.

And the lesson is for us. We live more than as many years after Christ's birth as Joseph lived before He came. Have we learned this lesson of forgiveness as well as Joseph learned it? Are there any of us who have been ill-used by brothers as he was? Are we keeping our own heart sweet and loving under the

ill-usage? Or have we allowed bitterness to creep in, a feeling of resentment, a desire for revenge? Let us study the picture of this badly-treated brother forgiving those who had so sorely wronged him, until its spirit sinks into the depths of our spirit. Life is too short for us to carry in our heart, even for one little day, a feeling of bitterness.

—J. R. Miller, From *The Story of Joseph*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Few things are more touching in this wholly melting story than the considerate tenderness of Joseph in sparing his brethren's feelings, and the exquisite delicacy with which he leads them to understand that he cherishes against them not the least resentment. Scarcely has he made the startling disclosure that he was Joseph, than, as if to prevent them from thinking of their sin, he hurries on to ask about their father. Then, as he sees them shrinking in alarm from his presence, expecting doubtless that the hour of recompense for Dothan had arrived, he kindly asks them not to stand aloof from him, but to come near. Again, as he understands the impossibility of their ever shutting their eyes to their deplorable wickedness, he tries to lead them rather to contemplate the wonderful way in which the hand of God had overruled his captivity for the salvation of their entire household. 'So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.' Beautiful sophistry of love! I do not know that Joseph's brethren would believe it; but it is obvious that in the enthusiasm of his forgiving love Joseph did."

—Taken from writings by Thomas Whitelaw



SEPTEMBER 17, 1995

JOSEPH REUNITED WITH HIS FATHER

Genesis 45:25 And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father.

26 And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.

27 And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived:

28 And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.

Genesis 46:1 And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.

2 And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I.

3 And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation:

4 I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

5 And Jacob rose up from Beersheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

28 And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.

29 And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

30 And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.

Genesis 47:28 And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years.

Genesis 48:1 And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

3 And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty ap-

peared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me,

4 And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession.

5 And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.

I Chronicles 5:1 ...Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel:...

2 For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's.)

MEMORY VERSE: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Joseph had Jacob and all of his family brought down to Egypt where they were, according to the plan of God, to become a great nation. Because of his faithfulness to God, the birthright of Jacob, which normally would have gone to Reuben, was given to Joseph and his sons.

LESSON BACKGROUND

How shocked with disbelief Jacob was when his sons returned from Egypt with the overwhelming news that his son Joseph, whom he had thought dead for twenty years was alive and was master in Egypt! Jacob's heart fainted for he could not believe the report. But when he saw all the things that Joseph had sent to him, and when he saw those wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him and all of his goods to Egypt his spirit revived. I am sure that the

brothers had some confessing and explaining to do to their father for the falsehood they had kept through the years before him. But their hearts were glad to know that all was forgiven and well. How wonderful that God met Jacob on his way down to Egypt and assured him that He was leading the way and that it was His divine will that the children of Israel go down to Egypt and there He would make of them a great nation. In our lesson we see that Jacob lived in Egypt for seventeen years, and at the age of one hundred and forty seven years he reached the end of life's pilgrimage for him. He pronounced a special recognition of the two sons of Joseph in the family inheritance. From our text in I Chronicles 5 we see that the birthright was given to Joseph. In our next lesson, which will be the final lesson in this series, we will see more about the blessing that Joseph and his posterity received and the spiritual values that all in Christ can share from that blessing.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was Jacob's first reaction to the report of Joseph?
2. What caused him to finally believe that Joseph was alive?
3. What did Jacob do at Beersheba, and why?
4. What did God say to Jacob concerning him going to Egypt?
5. What did Joseph and Jacob do when they met?
6. What did Jacob say about Joseph's two sons?
7. What does Jesus send to us from heaven that helps carry us?
8. Upon what do we base our assurance that we will see Jesus?
9. Why was Joseph granted the birthright?
10. Can you name the spiritual riches about Joseph that we can have in Christ today?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLES' COMMENTS

This world is famine-stricken. There is no bread here for our souls. Heaven has its storehouses. Daily there come to your doors from these reserves of goodness, supplies of blessing. There are blessings just for you, having your name written on them. They just meet your needs. They come just at the right time. Someone in heaven has His eye upon us and knows what we need, and sends His good things to us at the right moment. That someone is Christ. He is alive and in heaven. These good things that come into your days, with their joy and brightness are all from Him. The forgiveness of our sins, the peace that fills our heart, the joy that comes in sorrow, the help that comes in weakness, the human friendships that bring such benedictions, the answers to prayer, the blessings of providence—who but Jesus could send all these heavenly good things to us? These are the blest proofs to us that Jesus lives and rules in the land of blessedness and glory.

Wagons came for Jacob, to bear him to Egypt. Wagons will come for us by and by to carry us home. Jacob was not left in famine-smitten Canaan while Joseph continued to live and rule in glory in the land of corn and wine. The royal carriages came to take him to his son. He was met on the borders of the country by the son who had died to him, but still lived. By and by the wagons will come for us to take us into the very presence of Christ. Already they have come for some of our friends and have borne them to the land of life and blessedness. That is what death is, God's chariot swinging low, to carry home the loved saint. We shall leave the place of toil and care, to find rest. The wagons will take us to the land where our Saviour lives in glory and reigns over all. He will meet us on the edge of that blessed country. He will welcome us with tenderest love. He will give us a place near to Himself where He will nourish us and we shall go no more out forever.

—J. R. Miller, From *The Story of Joseph*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The history of Joseph is more than a tale of how the Egyptian nation was spared from famine. It is a story of Joseph and his relatives. The setting begins with Joseph and his family. The climax includes Joseph and his brethren, and the narrative ends as it began, with Joseph and his family. It is a story that ends well. We know that not only was all forgiven by Joseph, but he embraced his brethren as if he had always been on the best of terms with them. He was proud to present them to Pharaoh. Had he not been, he would have left them to languish in the land of Canaan.

In a sense, our life story can parallel Joseph's. The tale is between ourselves and Christ. The climax will occur when we behold Him coming to take us to a better land, a heavenly country. In this life we struggle and labor, but when all is told, things can end well for us, also. If we will humble ourselves and find peace with Christ, our story will culminate in Christ presenting us to God. Regardless of how we feel sometimes in the depths of our trials, our Redeemer and Prince will be able to present us faultless before the presence of His Father with exceeding joy. When Joseph met his father, it says he fell on Jacob's neck and wept a good while. (Gen. 46:29.) I'm convinced the magnitude of God's throne room and its pervasive air of love will cause us to fall at our Father's feet and praise His name.

If God should ask us on that day what our occupation has been, as Pharaoh inquired of Joseph's brothers, (Gen. 47:3) may we be able to say, "Thy servants were shepherds, men who cared for and bore a burden for other men's souls." We must be active for God if we would be blameless at our reunion in heaven.

—Wayne Murphey



SEPTEMBER 24, 1995

THE BLESSING OF JOSEPH

Genesis 49:22 Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall:

23 The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him:

24 But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)

25 Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:

26 The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

Deuteronomy 33:13 And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath,

14 And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon,

15 And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills,

16 And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.

17 His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.

Genesis 50: 15 And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.

16 And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying,

17 So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil; and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.

18 And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants.

19 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God?

20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

21 Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

25 And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

26 So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

MEMORY VERSE: By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. Hebrews 11:22.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Wonderful and rich blessings will be upon the faithful soul who endures the trials and heartaches of life with the right attitude and spirit of humility and faith in God.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

(Genesis 49:22), "*A fruitful bough*": The Hebrew says, "a fruitful son." The Septuagint says, "a son increased."

(Genesis 49:26), "*Above the blessings of my progenitors*": The blessings of Jacob upon Joseph were above the blessings that he bestowed on the rest of his sons. "*Unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills*": The Hebrew says, "to the limit of hills everlasting." It evidently means that the blessings of Joseph would extend beyond this mortal life clear unto the realms of eternity. "*Separate from his brethren*": The Hebrew says, "his brothers' leader." Joseph was separated and singled out by the will of God to be the leader, saviour and protector of his brethren notwithstanding all the harm and injury they sought to do to him.

(Deuteronomy 33:13), "*Precious things*": The Hebrew says, "the best things."

(Deuteronomy 33:14), "*Precious things put forth by the moon*": This means the best yield of the months.

(Deuteronomy 33:17), The Hebrew rendering of this verse is clearer: "As is the firstborn of his ox is his glory, and the horns of the wild ox are his horns. With them he shall unite the peoples to the ends of the earth." Is not this a prophecy of the Christ who through the power of His horn of salvation and resurrected life shall unite the redeemed into one glorious Church?

LESSON BACKGROUND

As Jacob lay on his deathbed he called his sons to gather around him. He said that he would tell them that which was to befall them in the last days. His blessings were prophetic, reaching clear into the gospel day. There are spiritual values here in these blessings that can be reality in the soul of the child of God through faith and obedience to Christ. The blessing that he pronounced upon Joseph seemed to outshine the blessings that he gave his other sons. Judah had a special blessing pronounced upon

other sons. Judah had a special blessing pronounced upon him, including as Joseph, prophecies of the Christ. Moses likewise blessed the children of Israel before he left them. We find his blessing upon the tribe of Joseph in the 33rd chapter of Deuteronomy to be similar to the blessing that Jacob bestowed. Both of these blessings are full of spiritual values for us who are saved today. We can enjoy these blessings in our lives as we follow the same spirit that was in Joseph, which was the Spirit of Christ.

We have the touching scene of Joseph's brothers' plea for mercy after their father had died. Once again Joseph's love, his forgiving love, is confirmed upon them.

At the end of a long and useful life for God we see Joseph, through faith, prophesying the return of his nation to their own land and gave commandment to take his bones with them, which were carried out when Moses and the children of Israel left Egypt, as recorded in Exodus 13:19.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Who were the archers that sorely grieved and hated Joseph?
2. In what way was Joseph a fruitful bough?
3. What was the well that kept Joseph watered?
4. What kind of blessings were pronounced upon Joseph?
5. What are the "blessings of the deep that lieth under"?
6. For what purpose did God separate and single out Joseph?
7. How far will the blessings of Joseph reach?
8. How can we today share in the blessings of Joseph?
9. How did Joseph confirm his love and forgiveness to his brothers?
10. How was Joseph's commandment concerning his bones an act of faith?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLES' COMMENTS

A rose of beauty, strength, and grace was Joseph in his life,
O'ercoming hatred, harm, and wrong and all the ills of
strife.

From tragedy to triumph borne on wings of faith divine,
His life a sweet example was upon our hearts to shine.

For he was singled out to be the leader of his kin,
To go before them and prepare a refuge for them when
The famine's blight severe would fall upon the sons of
earth:

A strong and faithful stalwart soul who knew the sense of
worth.

Abused by those he loved, betrayed and bruised so oft' was
he,

Like Him who would in later years be slain upon a tree;
Sold as a slave away from home down in a foreign land,
Yet strengthened by the mighty God and His unerring
Hand.

We see him rise above each storm, and prosper in his toil,
Steadfast and faithful at each turn without a threat of spoil.
We see him drink the bitter cup of suffering for the right,
With no complaints or murmurings, just keeping in the
light.

Forgotten in the dungeon dark of doubtful gloom despair,
We see him patiently endure, for Christ was surely there.
And then the day at last did come for him to take his place
Among the great men of the earth so full of truth and grace.

A law of kindness to forgive, a wisdom to discern,
A principle of godly fear, a love to sweetly burn,
All these we see in Joseph's life, may we in turn the same,
Pursue the mark of true success in Jesus' holy name!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Joseph lived for many years among the Egyptians. Through his efforts, the citizens of that country were spared from the horror of famine. He married an Egyptian woman and with her had children. He became an integral part of the nation's commerce system and even in death, his body was preserved after the Egyptian custom. However, through it all, in the depths of his heart, Joseph was an Israelite and Canaan was his home. He knew he was a wafaring stranger in the land of Egypt.

We have many ties to this earth. We work and partake of the temporal things in this life. We marry and become involved in family life and relationships. But we must not forget that we are pilgrims and strangers. Those who love God are our people and our citizenship is in heaven.

—Wayne Murphey



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