

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

STUDY NUMBER FIVE – GENESIS 42:1-38

INTRODUCTION:

Let's review last week.

- **Joseph was in prison.**
- **He had anticipated that the cupbearer was going to remember him but he forgot him.**
- **Joseph stayed there for two more years in prison.**
- **Pharaoh had two dreams and the cupbearer says, “Oh I forgot. There was a young Hebrew slave who in prison told us what was going to happen to us and interpreted our dreams before you ever delivered me and executed the baker.”**
- **Pharaoh has Joseph sent to him and asks Joseph to interpret his dreams.**
- **Joseph says I can't interpret your dreams but God can.**
- **Economically Pharaoh you are going to have seven great years but then the crash is going to come for seven more years.**

- **Pharaoh was so impressed with the insight that he promoted Joseph to the number two position in Egypt.**
- **During the next seven years Egypt flourished. Joseph instituted economic policies that made it possible for Egypt to be prepared for the upcoming seven bad years.**
- **Joseph is introduced to Asenath and they are married and he has two boys. Manasseh and Ephraim.**

So Joseph as we come to the study today, is elevated to the place of leadership.

He was 17 when he left Canaan to go down to Egypt

He stayed 7 years in Potiphar's house 24 years old.

He was put in prison for 6 years

Joseph was 30 when he was elevated to this supreme position.

Now the 7 good years have passed on so he is probably 38 or 39.

The turn economically has already taken place as the story opens today.

Countries around the land of Egypt have begun to really feel the effects of this poverty.

As we begin the study in verse 1 the cameras go back to Canaan for a little bit.

v. 1 When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why do you just keep looking at each other?”

Now you can just see Jacob, he enters the kitchen early in the morning.

He makes his coffee with his coffee pod machine.

And he grabs the Egyptian Times and he begins to read the business section. ▼

He sees all the economic news and he notices there is one country that stands out over all the others and that is Egypt.

Things are getting rough around the household. His boys have had kids coming out their ears and there is a total of 66 in this family.

Verse 1 “When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why do you just keep looking at each other?”

After he reads this good news, he calls an emergency family meeting.

He says, “Fellows, I have great news. I have just found out there is grain in Egypt and we aren’t going to die.”

Can you imagine how those guys felt when he said Egypt? What are they thinking? Anywhere but Egypt.

Egypt immediately makes them think, “22 years ago that’s where Joseph went.”

It just scares them.

And Jacob says, “Why do you just keep looking at each other?”

v. 2 He continued, “I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die.”

Jacob is wealthy from his ranching operations. He has plenty of money in the bank.

And here Jacob issues a command. He says, Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die.” This is serious.”

v. 3 Then ten of Joseph’s brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt.

v. 4 But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him.

In the 22 years since Joseph left, Benjamin the only other boy that was born to Rachel, and she died in his childbirth, ▼ has become the Special One.

All that Jacob has done, is just taken Benjamin and substituted him for Joseph.

“All the rest of you go buy the grain but just leave Benjamin with me. He is mine and I'm afraid something might happen to him. Leave him here.”

v. 5 So Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also.

Evidently the piercing economic effects of this judgment had affected all the lands around Egypt ▼

And people from all over were showing up in large lines to buy grain.

v. 6 Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the one who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's

brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground.

Can you imagine what they are thinking while on the trip to Egypt?

“I wonder what ever happened to Joseph?

The last place they would expect to see him is head of the Food Allocation Administration where he is distributing food here.

And when they came “they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground.”

Sometimes God works very slowly but He always gets the job done.

Joseph had a dream 22 years ago and now he is just getting a small glimpse of the ultimate fulfillment of the dream that had been made.

Now the boys realize that this is serious business. So they bow down in humble respect to the governor of the land.

v. 7 As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. “Where do you come from?” he

asked. “From the land of Canaan,” they replied, “to buy food.”

In verse 7 it says, “he pretended to be a stranger,” what does that mean?

“He pretended to be a stranger,” in the sense that he used Egyptian.

Joseph knew Hebrew and he understood what they were saying to them ▼

But he didn’t act like it, he pretended through the interpreter that he didn’t understand.

So “He pretended to be a stranger,” in that sense ▼

And tried to be as much of an Egyptian as he possibly could be.

Now some people look at that and they say, “why did he speak to them harshly?”

The key to the understanding of the next critical events in this relationship is to realize ▼

that Joseph is going to put them to the test ▼

before he ever makes a provision of a blessing in their lives.

Invariably you will find that God

does the same thing in your life and in mine.

He deals with us harshly to shape us up before He brings the promised blessing into our lives.

Joseph isn't trying to get even. He is trying to do one thing.

He wants to find out if their attitude toward Benjamin is the same as it was 22 years ago toward him.

If they have the same bad attitude toward Benjamin that they had toward him 22 years ago they aren't getting any grain.

So all of these events now will take on real meaning if you will realize ▼

that overriding it all is Joseph trying to determine if his brothers have changed in 22 years ▼

or if they have the same attitude toward Benjamin that they had toward Joseph which caused them to sell him into slavery.

v. 8 Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him.

v. 9 Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, “You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected.”

You are Yankees. I know it. You have come from the north to spy out the south and you are getting ready for war!

When the word “spies” comes out of the mouth of this leader, that’s like saying “you guys are going to be very fortunate if you ever get out of here alive.

Now they are so scared, verse 10.

v. 10 “No, my lord,” they answered. “Your servants have come to buy food.

v. 11 We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies.”

v. 12 “No!” he said to them. “You have come to see where our land is unprotected.”

Now why does he say that and why does he refuse to hear them?

Remember what happened 22 years ago when Joseph was sitting in a pit crying loudly for deliverance and they were sitting around eating the groceries that he had just brought and they never heard a word he said? And here they are experiencing some of the same

deafness that they gave to him when he cried for deliverance and they would not listen.

Now he does not hear a word they are saying, he just keeps on saying, “you are spies.” Why does he use the terms “spies?” Because that is what they called him. Daddy’s little spy! Come down here to tell on Gad and Asher and Dan and Naphtali. You went back and gave that bad report to dad. And then as soon as he is coming out there to check on them in Dothan probably the first thing said, “oh here comes daddy’s spy, let’s kill him and we will see what happens to his dreams.” You see they have treated him like that. And Joseph is just kind of you know doing these things in the test to get them to remember what they did and it accomplishes its purpose very beautifully as you are going to see here in just a minute.

v. 13 But they replied, “Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more.”

Well, Joseph finally got the whole history. At least he found out what they thought of him. “We are sons of one man. One is still back home and one is no more.” They were believing their own story now.

v. 14 Joseph said to them, “It is just as I told you: You are spies!

v. 15 And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here.

You see Joseph puts his finger on the Benjamin here.

v. 16 Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!”

v. 17 And he put them all in custody for three days.

Seventy-two hours to sit in there and think about what is going to happen. Now you notice Joseph softens up a little bit too. He says I am going to keep nine of you here and I want one of you to go back. I think Joseph's thinking you know my dad is old and if only one brother goes back my dad is going to die. I am scared so I am going to keep one and that is what he says.

v. 18 On the third days, Joseph said to them, “Do this and you will live, for I fear God:

v. 19 If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households.

v. 20 But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die.” This they proceeded to do.

Now look at the response to all of this testing. Here is the key. The beginning of the test is revealing their hearts in verse 21.

v. 21 They said to one another, “Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that’s why this distress has come upon us.”

Now there is the beginning of true repentance. When you and I as people can see in the inadvertent circumstances that hit us in our lives the fact that God is using that because of something in our past lives. He is using it for the benefit of bringing us to a repentant and broken spirit. We are on the road to recovery.

Now whenever there is repentance there are three things involved. There is the CONSCIENCE, there is the MEMORY, and there is the REASON.

1. First, what is the CONSCIENCE saying? We are truly guilty.
2. What is the MEMORY saying? “We saw the distress of his soul.” It is just like they have got a fully colored picture of what happened 22 years ago. “We saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us.”
3. And what is the REASON saying? Therefore, “this distress has come upon us.” I just wrote Numbers 32:23 by that verse

“be sure your sins will find you out.”

Verse 22, isn't this just like the oldest brother.

v. 22 Reuben replied, “Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood.”

Oldest brother says, “I told you guys so! And I told you not to do it and you went ahead and did it anyway and now look what happened. We are all down here and we are spies and it's going to be lucky if we get out of this mess.” “Now comes the reckoning for his blood.”

Verse 23 is sort of humorous.

v. 23 They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.

You see there had been this interpreter that is interpreting into the Egyptian and the Hebrew into the Egyptian but Joseph does not need any interpreter. He understands every word those guys are saying. And understands this total conversation that is going on between them unbeknownst to the fact that Joseph hears every word that they are saying.

Joseph just he feels love for these guys. He would like to just shorten the test. He would just like to tell them.

But it is not time yet. And it just overwhelms them. He begins to cry.

v. 24 He turned away from them and began to weep, but then turned back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes.

Joseph just he feels love for these guys. He would like to just shorten the test. He would just like to tell them. But it is not time yet. And it just overwhelms them. He begins to cry.

Now why did he take Simeon? Simeon is son number two. It is obvious that Reuben was for Joseph. He did not want to sell Joseph. Remember he wanted to get him out of the pit and take him back to dad. So Simeon is son number two. And I think Simeon is the one who was totally responsible for the whole plan. Judah being son number four just went along with it and said let's sell him. But I think he picks Simeon right out of the bunch as though they could remember and have a visible object lesson all the way back to Canaan that the guy who trumped this thing up and worked it out in the first place is the one who is paying the price of sitting down there in prison during the whole time that they are heading back home.

v. 25 Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grains, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to

give them provisions for their journey. After this was done for them,

Joseph told the administration he said, “look give them all the grain they need to take home and then take all their money and put it in the mouths of their sacks and let them go.” Now why is it free? Why does he just give it to them? Because Joseph will never be obligated to him family.

Any more than Jesus Christ would ever be obligated to you. Salvation is a free gift. You do not earn it. You do not work for it. It is an act of God’s provision and grace. And when we learn that in overwhelming love and gratitude we reach out and take the gift of His Son that provides that beautiful eternal life.

v. 26 they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left.

v. 27 At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack.

You see they traveled all day and they get to the KOA you know and they are setting up camp and they are getting all ready to go take a shower and one of the guys says, “hey I opened my sack to give some grain to the animals and guess what? My money is in the sack.” Now what are they thinking? “Oh good grief. First we are spies and now they are going to get us for embezzlement. They are going to get us for stealing the

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grain and taking the money.” And it proves to be even a more difficult trial.

v. 28 “My silver has been returned,” he said to his brothers. “Here it is in my sack.” Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, “What is this that God has done to us?”

v. 29 When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them. They said,

Now look how honest the report is of the brothers.

v. 30 The man who is lord over the land spoke harshly to us and treated us as though we were spying on the land.

v. 31 But we said to him, ‘We are honest men; we are not spies.

v. 32 We were twelve brothers, sons of one father. One is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in Canaan.’

v. 33 Then the man who is lord over the land said to us, ‘This is how I will know you are honest men: Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take food for your starving households and go.

v. 34 But bring your youngest brother to me so I will know that you are not spies but honest men. Then I

will give your brother back to you, and you can trade in the land.”

v. 35 As they were emptying their sacks, there in each man’s sack was his pouch of silver! When they and their father saw the money pouches, they were frightened.

Now verse 36 is a very key verse. I am going to weave verse 36 into some lessons for next week. So I want you to star that verse and I you to underline a little phrase because I am going to lift out of it some of God’s ultimate purpose in all of our lives. And we need to really focus on this for a just a few minutes.

In response to all this here is old Jacob. He has heard the story. He has seen the money. He has seen the grain. He does not understand what happened. And look at his answer.

v. 36 Their father Jacob said to them, “You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. *Now underline that next phrase. Everything is against me!*”

You know how many times in your life you have hit storms. You have hit trials. And they have come maybe one, two, three, four, five in succession. And you have been heard to say from your lips “all these things are against me.”

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And then many of you have lived long enough that after that cycle things begin to work out and do I hear you say “thank you Lord for what you did because now it put me where I am?” How many times do we have to learn that we must hold our judgment on a given set of circumstances until the whole picture is drawn?

You and I can see it. We know the overriding purpose of God is to get the children of Israel in the land of Egypt where he can make provision for them and fulfill the requirements of the Abrahamic covenant. We know that.

But here is Jacob at this moment of grief. He has just counted the boys and he only comes up with nine and then this report and so he makes this statement which is a short-sided statement “Everything is against me! Joseph is no more. Simeon is no more. Now you are going to take Benjamin.” Who said Joseph is no more? Who said Simeon is not all right? You have jumped to conclusions. And what do you know about what he is going to do with Benjamin?

All Jacob has now is Benjamin. And Benjamin creates the greatest problem in the lives of these 66 mouths simply because of Jacob’s resistance against God’s purpose in the whole thing. And it is right here in this verse. “Everything is against me!”

What is that verse where Paul says, “our light affliction is but for a moment and it works for us a far more

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exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Wait for the rest of the facts.

Someone says if you do not have all the facts, you have no right to an opinion. And when it comes to dealing with God, reserve your judgment. Sure it is going to get rough. Sure things are going to happen.

God expects us to run a good race and it is going to get rough. It is going to be tough. Because the minute you make a commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and you give your life to Him things are not going to get easier, they are going to get better and better and better but not easier. You are going to be put into the crucible. Expect it. Look forward to it. Because the sovereign God is beginning to shape you up so you will begin to make a contribution to the society in which you live.

But we so often are so premature. We snatch at the appearance. We pronounce judgment on the uncompleted process. Why don't we learn from our own ignorances and recognize that God's never failing providence is still at work even though it looks like three boys are no longer with him and he only has nine left.

v. 37 Then Reuben said to his father, “You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back.”

Here is the oldest. He sees the seriousness of the situation. The fact that their lives are in jeopardy and they could not bring back grain that would last for very long for 66 people.

v. 38 But Jacob said, “My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow.”

As the study ends today, we have a man who is resisting the will of God. We have somebody who through his resistance of the will of God is going to affect everybody else in the family. Now God has a way of dealing with his stubborn children.

And “As the World Turns” will continue in its next chapter you will discover how God works it out. What God has to do when we are dragging out heals through the dirt resisting His ultimate purpose in our lives. We will see that next week.

Now there are a lot of lessons that are lifted out of tonight’s study. And I want to zero in on some of these now that we have gone through the passage.

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LESSON #1: I hope you are impressed with the persistence of divine purpose.

We have walked long enough now with the Lord in this situation that we can see his divine purpose just continuing to go. The persistence of divine purpose is just working out. You see a little glimpse of it as Joseph gets down there. Now the famine economically has been created. Joseph has been elevated to power. He is seeing the first glimpse of the fulfillment of his dreams. And now the pressure is back up in Canaan to focus this whole family down there. How is the economic situation going to pull that whole family down there? It is the persistence of divine purpose.

LESSON #2: You can see the strength of human affection by the love of Joseph for his brothers. He does not like this test and his tears tell you that he loves them. And he is not bitter towards them you know. You are going to see that even more next week.

LESSON #3: You can see the power of a guilty conscience. You can see the power of a guilty conscience. Although it has been 22 years they can remember it as though it was yesterday. Although it has been 22 years, the photographic ability of their mind can replay that incident just as though it happened yesterday. Maybe you are like that today. Maybe there is something in your life that happened way back there. And you have swept it

under the rug. You have put it in the closet. But the memory of it defiles you because you have never dealt with it. These boys did that.

They have lived a lie for 22 years. They took the blood-spattered coat back to their dad and said he is dead. And now they are believing their own lie when they say “and one is no more.” But when the stress gets on them, what comes to the surface? Bam! Just like that. The event. And they are recounting the adverse events right now in light of the guilty conscience that they have not dealt with 22 years ago.

LESSON #4: In this passage we see the nature of true repentance. If you are coming to a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and you are sitting here tonight and you do not have that relationship with him, here is the process:

- 1. First, your CONSCIENCE is telling you that you have offended God by sin. You have broken His laws. The Bible says, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Your conscience right now is telling you that and you know it and your conscience verifies that.**
- 2. Secondly, your MEMORY can replay it. You know the event that condemns you. It can be a series of them and your memory is replaying them. The Spirit of God is allowing your memory to replay them.**
- 3. And then your REASON is saying, “ah-hah. I have been brought to this very moment to focus on the**

need for that relationship.” And oh that we would not spurn the convicting work of the Spirit of God in our lives. Be careful as you resist, as you harden your heart you get further and further away. Many people say, “You know I feel so far away from God.” Well guess who moved? God is always pursuing the relationship. God from the Garden of Eden has longed for closeness with us. Longed for oneness. Longed for intimacy. And whose problem is it? It is ours. Because we think we can handle it. We think we can take care of it. And so we keep Him at a distance.

But when we face something like this situation with these boys then comes the nature of true repentance. I, first with my CONSCIENCE, know I am guilty, with my MEMORY I can see the place of my guilt, and with my REASON I can say this is the reason this has come to pass.

**LESSON #5: We see the short-sightedness of human reason. Jacob is looking only at the present events and he pronounces a wrong verdict. Now you have the advantage of knowing what is coming. But are you saying that tonight to God?
“All these things are against me.”
“I lost that contract.”
“I’m losing my job.”
“This is happening and that’s happening.”
“All these things are against me.”
Watch it! We are vulnerable. He has the big picture. He sees the end. He sees the beginning. He sees the**

entire drama of our lives. And He knows what you need to bring about a response. The short-sightedness of the human reason. We look only at the present circumstances.

Alright now what I want to do as I conclude the study tonight is I want to point out seven things that I see through these first four studies. I just backed up at the end of this study and I took a look at what I have learned through these first four studies in the life of Joseph. And I have come up with these statements.

- 1. GOD HAS A PURPOSE FOR EVERY LIFE. We can see that dramatically displayed in Joseph.**
- 2. THAT PURPOSE CALLS FOR DISCIPLINE.** Joseph has really had to go through it. You say the purpose in the dreams but the 13 years were years of difficult discipline of God preparing him for the fulfillment of the purpose.
- 3. I've been impressed with THE DUTY OF FAITHFULNESS.** You know Jesus said that to those guys when he was trying to separate the great big crowd from those who really meant business. He said, "if any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." It is the faithfulness day in and day out. Joseph was always faithful no matter what the circumstance was to keep his

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confidence in God. Are you like that? Are you faithful? Are you committed to the task?

I remember one guy telling a story that over in Russia they were having a big church service and all of a sudden a bunch of armed guards come running in with machine guns and they said, "all of you Christians who are ready to die for your faith line up against the wall and the rest of you that want to get out, get out." Well over 2/3 of the audience left." And there was just a small group lined up against the wall who were going to be faithful to death. As soon as the rest of the people exited. The guys put down their machine guns and said, "Now lets have a real Bible study.

You know that is where it is, that is where the action is. You see we have got so many people who are looking on, who can talk big but they have not got down here yet where they have really learned to be faithful where they are willing to pay the price, any price, whatever it is to be faithful to him. Joseph has been like that. It has been beautiful.

4. GOD WILL PERFORM TO THE END WHAT HE BEGAN. He told Joseph this was going to happen and we are going to see it come clear and through to the very end. He is going to take it on through. Now let me give you a New Testament counterpart to that.

Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Job stated it in Job 23:10

“When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

God will complete until the end what He has started. Do you realize in Romans chapter 8 when he talks about your glorification it is in past tense? He looks on you and me as though we are already glorified. The job is already done. As far as He is concerned we are just in transit. As far as He is concerned the task of glorification has already been complete.

- 5. Next. GOD IS GLORIFIED WHEN OTHERS ARE FAITHFULLY SERVED. God is glorified when others are faithfully served. Every time we have seen him he has been faithful to serve hasn't he? He served his dad, he served in Potiphar's house, he served in prison, and now he is serving in Pharaoh's court. God is glorified when others are served. Jesus said, "I came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give my life a ransom for everyone." And He is the one who in John 13 is walking around with a bucket of water washing the feet of His followers. He knew what it was to be a servant of others. God is glorified when others are faithfully served no matter where it is.**

6. GOD PROVES HIMSELF TO THOSE WHO TRUST HIM. Thirteen years of adversity, a prolonged two years when he already thought that the cupbearer was going to get him out and he had to stay longer. Just, he kept on trusting the Lord. And God proves Himself to those who trust Him.

7. And finally, GOD'S WISDOM IS VERIFIED IN THE OUTCOME OF THE EVENTS. Now you can see God's wisdom a little bit. God kept him there for two more years because Pharaoh had not had the dreams yet. Can you imagine what would happen if he had got out two years earlier? He would have been on back up in Canaan, never heard a thing about it, and we never would heard anymore of Joseph. But that two-year delay was very significant. Because Pharaoh had the dreams and overnight God's wisdom is verified in the outcome of the events.

Well I just wanted to share that with you as a little extra as we backed off and took a look at it from the standpoint of where we have traveled through the four studies.

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: We can see the persistence of divine purpose. God is working to the ultimate fulfillment of His promises.

LESSON #2: You can see the strength of human affection by the love which Joseph has for his brothers. He loves them unconditionally.

LESSON #3: You can see the power of a guilty conscience. Although 22 years have now transpired, the boys can remember even as though it were yesterday the sin which they committed against Joseph.

LESSON #4: The nature of true repentance, affecting the conscience, the memory, and the reason: (1) The conscience—we are verily guilty. (2) The memory—we saw the anguish. (3) The reason—therefore is this distress come upon us.

LESSON #5: The short-sightedness of human reason: Jacob is looking at the present events as being against him, but from God's point of view they are all working together for good.

LESSON #6: When you are fighting God's purpose, you can plan on everything being against you.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

STUDY NUMBER FIVE - GENESIS 42:1-38 NOTES

v. 1 When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why do you just keep looking at each other?”

v. 2 He continued, “I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die.”

v. 3 Then ten of Joseph’s brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt.

v. 4 But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph’s brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him.

v. 5 So Israel’s sons were among those who went to buy grain, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also.

v. 6 Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the one who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph’s brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground.

v. 7 As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. “Where do you come from?” he asked. “From the land of Canaan,” they replied, “to buy food.”

v. 8 Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him.

v. 9 Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, “You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected.”

v.10 “No, my lord,” they answered. “Your servants have come to buy food.

v.11 We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies.”

v.12 “No!” he said to them. “You have come to see where our land is unprotected.”

v.13 But they replied, “Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more.”

v.14 Joseph said to them, “It is just as I told you: You are spies!

v.15 And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here.

v.16 Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!”

v.17 And he put them all in custody for three days.

v.18 On the third day, Joseph said to them, “Do this and you will live, for I fear God:

v.19 If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households.

v.20 But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die.” This they proceeded to do.

v.21 They said to one another “Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that’s why this distress has come upon us.”

v.22 Reuben replied, “Didn’t I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn’t listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood.”

v.23 They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.

v.24 He turned away from them and began to weep, but then turned back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes.

v.25 Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man’s silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. After this was done for them,

v.26 they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left.

v.27 At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack.

v.28 “My silver has been returned,” he said to his brothers. “Here it is in my sack.” Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, “What is this that God has done to us?”

v.29 When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them. They said,

v.30 “The man who is lord over the land spoke harshly to us and treated us as though we were spying on the land.

v.31 But we said to him, ‘We are honest men; we are not spies.

v.32 We were twelve brothers, sons of one father. One is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in Canaan.’

v.33 Then the man who is lord over the land said to us, ‘This is how I will know whether you are honest men: Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take food for your starving households and go.

v.34 But bring your youngest brother to me so I will know that you are not spies but honest men. Then I will give your brother back to you, and you can trade in the land.’”

v.35 As they were emptying their sacks, there in each man’s sack was his pouch of silver! When they and their father saw the money pouches, they were frightened.

v.36 Their father Jacob said to them, “You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is against me!”

v.37 Then Reuben said to his father, “You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back.”

v.38 But Jacob said, “My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow.”

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Genesis 42:1-38 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What brings the ten brothers of Joseph to Egypt, according to verses 1-3?

3. Why did Jacob keep Benjamin home and send the other ten, according to verse 4?

4. Describe Joseph's position in the land and the response of his brothers when they come to see him in verse 6.

5. What does Joseph remember, according to verse 9?

6. How does Joseph treat his brothers and what request does he make of them?

7. What provision does Joseph make for his brothers?

8. How do the brothers respond to the blessing of Joseph upon them, according to verse 28?

9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: We can see the persistence of divine purpose. God is working to the ultimate fulfillment of His promises.

LESSON #2: You can see the strength of human affection by the love which Joseph has for his brothers. He loves them unconditionally.

LESSON #3: You can see the power of a guilty conscience. Although 22 years have now transpired, the boys can remember even as though it were yesterday the sin which they committed against Joseph.

LESSON #4: The nature of true repentance, affecting the conscience, the memory, and the reason: (1) The conscience—we are verily guilty. (2) The memory—we saw the anguish. (3) The reason—therefore is this distress come upon us.

LESSON #5: The short-sightedness of human reason: Jacob is looking at the present events as being against him, but from God's point of view they are all working together for good.

LESSON #6: When you are fighting God's purpose, you can plan on everything being against you.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:
