

Joseph – Lesson Four

(Son, Slave, Prisoner and Ruler)

Introduction: The story of Joseph’s life is important for us on several different levels. It teaches us about God’s love and truth working through a flawed family. We learn the value of trusting a promise over experience by watching his life develop. We learn that God gives only a little light on our future and then expects us to trust him as he unfolds history. And finally, in Joseph’s life we see the ongoing fulfillment of the gospel promise that includes us.

In **Lesson One** we met Joseph and his brothers while Joseph was a young seventeen year old. We saw how Jacob favored Joseph and how that caused animosity between him and his brothers. Then Joseph had dreams from God that promised he would one day be a ruler to whom they bowed down. They were so jealous that they plotted to kill him but ultimately decided to sell him to traders headed for Egypt.

In **Lesson Two** we saw Joseph as a slave in Potiphar’s home. We saw how God was with him and Potiphar saw it too. He elevated Joseph to be his personal attendant. Then Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce Joseph and then lied about him getting him thrown into prison. We noted how God was using injustices to fulfill his plan to make Joseph ruler over Egypt.

In **Lesson Three** we saw Joseph as a prisoner, attending to the needs of others, experiencing God’s blessing even in a very difficult situation, being forgotten and then remembered at just the right time to be elevated to the second in command of all of Egypt.

Now, in **Lesson Four** we will see Joseph fully realizing the meaning of his entire 13 year journey – it was to save thousands of lives and to preserve a “remnant” for God’s chosen people so they could fulfill history that God would use to bring us a Savior. Because Joseph saw God’s plan in all of his wanderings he was able to rise to the occasion and forgive his brothers with the strength and wisdom God provided. We will be encouraged and enlightened on how to live like Joseph under God’s amazing grace as we explore this lesson.

Summary of Genesis 41:41-49 – Joseph is elevated by Pharaoh in the eyes of everyone. He is given an Egyptian name that fits Pharaoh’s purposes and he is given Asenath as a wife. During the seven good years Joseph gathers so much grain that he stops keeping records. By God’s grace the Mediterranean world is made ready for the seven years of famine because of Joseph’s leadership.

Read Genesis 41:50-52 – Joseph and Asenath have two sons.

Digging Deeper With Pastor Patterson

1. What do the names Manasseh and Ephraim mean? And what do these names tell us about Joseph’s faith and spiritual understanding?
2. How would the faith that made Joseph give his sons these names also help him to forgive his brothers when he met them later?

Taking It Home

How does counting blessings from God give us strength to forgive others when the need arises?

Summary of Genesis 41:53-42:5 – The seven years of famine started and was so severe that everyone in the eastern and southern Mediterranean world were chaffing with hunger. As people came forward to Pharaoh, he directed them to Joseph. In Canaan Jacob and his family were starving, so he sent his sons down to Egypt to buy grain. He did not send Benjamin however. He wanted to preserve him especially since he thought Joseph was dead. Jacob's favoritism continued.

Read Genesis 42:6-13 – Joseph's brothers meet Joseph without realizing it.

Digging Deeper with Pastor Patterson

1. Why did Joseph pretend to be a stranger when he recognized his brothers?
2. Why would Joseph accuse his brothers of being spies?
3. What might Joseph have been thinking when he heard his brothers say, "One is no more."?
4. How would Joseph's dreams be affecting him as his brothers bowed down?

Taking It Home

1. When we realize that God is driving our lives how will that change the way we react to surprising moments in our lives?
2. When God gives us the "upper hand" in a relationship, what is our responsibility and how what can we learn from Joseph?

Summary of Genesis 42:14-20 – Joseph held to accusing his brothers of being spies and put them in prison for three days. At first he said they would all have to stay in Egypt until he saw Benjamin. But then at the end of the third day he told them he would only hold one brother while they went home to get Benjamin and came back. He held Simeon.

Read Genesis 42:21-28 – Joseph's brothers argue in front of him.

Digging Deeper with Pastor Patterson

1. What do we learn about the brothers as they argue in front of Joseph?
2. How would their argument help Joseph to better understand his brothers?
3. Why did Joseph weep?
4. Why do you think Joseph had the silver put back into his brother's sacks?

Taking It Home

1. How does God's love put us on a completely different wave length than others at times?
2. We see Joseph doing what he can to rebuild trust in own heart toward his brothers. Describe how important trust is in order to have restored and renewed relationships.

Summary of 42:29-44:33 – Jacob's family eats all of their grain and so the brothers have to go back to buy more. They must take Benjamin back with them as Joseph had demanded but Jacob resists strongly and finally lets him go. Judah makes himself personally responsible for Benjamin. When they arrive, they are welcomed and fed a banquet by Joseph. Benjamin gets five times as much. When they leave for home, at their first stop, they are accosted by Joseph's steward who accuses them of stealing Joseph's cup. It is found and Benjamin's sack. They all go back to Joseph and he accuses them of stealing. Then Joseph announces that he will send them away without Benjamin but Judah stands up and tells Joseph how he cannot let that happen. It would kill Jacob. That's when Joseph finally cracks.

Read Genesis 45:1-11 – Joseph reveals himself to his Brothers

Digging Deeper with Pastor Patterson

1. Imagine what was going through Joseph's brothers mind when he said, "I am Joseph!"
2. How could Joseph tell them NOT to be distressed or angry with themselves?
3. What two reasons did Joseph tell them God had used them to send him to Egypt?
4. Joseph talked a lot about what god had done and not the brothers. How does this help us see his spiritual wisdom?

Taking It Home

1. Joseph had redefined all the events of his life as God's doing for wholesome reasons. How could we learn to heal from our past by following his example?
2. Joseph saw in this lifetime how it all worked out. We don't always see it on earth. What promises of God help us wait even till we get to heaven to see how it all works out?
3. Joseph realizes he is part of a much bigger plan. How does that plan include us?
4. What bigger plan are our lives a part of?

Read Genesis 46:1-4 – Jacob Prepares to Meet Joseph

Digging Deeper With Pastor Patterson

1. How do God's words to Jacob here compare to his words to Jacob at Bethel when he ran from Esau?
2. Why is God punctuating the story with his promises?

Summary of Genesis 46:5-50:21 - Jacob and his entire family move down to Egypt. Joseph settles them in the land of Goshen where they prosper and grow in numbers. Jacob lives 17 more years and before he dies he blesses all of his sons and gives them words of destiny. Judah is given a messianic prophecy. Jacob makes Joseph promise to bury him back in Canaan with his forefathers. After the burial, Joseph's brothers become fearful that he might take revenge, but Joseph reassures them of his love and points them back to God.

Read Genesis 50:22-26 – Joseph leaves behind a legacy of faith.

Digging Deeper with Pastor Patterson

1. How did Joseph use his last words to help create faith in the minds of his family?
2. What plan did he create to establish faith filled conversations throughout all the generations that followed him?

Taking It Home

1. Explain this Statement: You cannot fully understand the meaning of your life apart from the meaning of God's plan for all lives.
2. God's plan of salvation for others is more important than our individual goals. How will this truth help guide us in "good" and "bad" times?

Summary – Joseph lived an extraordinary life because God's blessing was on him. Since Joseph trusted God's word and was filled with his love, he cooperated with God's plan very well. The result was great blessings for thousands in his own generation and billions to this day. Joseph was a major factor in the "fullness of time" talked about in Galatians 4 that brought us Jesus Christ. When we look at Joseph's life and see how God used him to bring us Jesus Christ we are settled in our faith. When we look at Joseph's life and see ourselves and our own struggles, we are challenged to live by our faith more instead of our selfish pride. Romans 15:4 has come true for us. **"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."**