

## **Joseph – Lesson Two**

(Son, **Slave**, Prisoner and Ruler)

**Introduction:** Two generations before Joseph, God had told his grandfather, Abraham, that he would give his descendants the Land of Canaan but only after they had endured captivity for 400 years in Egypt (Genesis 15:13). The story of Joseph's life tells how God moved Abraham's family from Canaan to Egypt to fulfill his plans. In the New Testament, Romans 15, the Apostle Paul tells us that the stories of the Old Testament were written to strengthen our faith and give us hope. Tracing the grace of God as he guides Joseph through fast changing circumstances does just that, it strengthens faith and gives us insight into our own faith journey with God. This Bible Study series will divide Joseph's life into four chapters: **1)** His life as a favored and yet hated **son**, **2)** his life as a poor and yet favored **slave**, **3)** his life as a forgotten and yet favored **prisoner**, and **4)** his life as a powerful and yet forgiving **ruler**. As we trace the life of Joseph we will see God's hand in everything; those things that seem good and those that seem bad.

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.

For **Lesson Two** we will spend all of our time in Genesis 39. If you are able to read this chapter before we begin it would be a big help.

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 will see Joseph as a slave in the house Potiphar to whom he was sold in Egypt.

### **Read Genesis 39:1-6a – God blessed Joseph as a slave.**

#### **Digging Deeper with Pastor Patterson**

Who is Potiphar and what is a captain of the guard in Egypt?

What reason did Moses give us to explain why Joseph did well in Potiphar's home?

For Joseph to prosper what must have been his own attitude in these perplexing times?

What skills would Joseph develop as he managed a large household operation?

## Applying God's Word

1. These perplexing times were giving Joseph some important life skills. What can we learn about this when God guides us through perplexing times?
2. Look up Ephesians 2:10. If you were to comfort Joseph without knowing his future, how would you use this verse to encourage him?
3. Discuss this axiom: Let God be in charge of your destiny. You just manage your own attitude.

## Read Genesis 39:6b – 12 – God let Joseph be tested by severe temptation.

### Digging Deeper with Pastor Patterson

We pray in the Lord's Prayer that God would not lead us into temptation. Why then did God let Joseph get tempted so strongly?

How did Joseph show he was keeping the two greatest commandments?

Joseph stayed true to God even while it seemed God was leading Joseph through great difficulty. How could that be?

## Applying God's Word

1. Look at these verses from James 1. Using what you see here and what you have heard from Joseph's story, explain how we can learn to overcome temptation when God lets us endure it.

*<sup>2</sup> Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. <sup>4</sup> Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. <sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. <sup>13</sup> When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; <sup>14</sup> but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. <sup>15</sup> Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. James 1:2-5,13-15*

2. Explain how if we will make it our aim to keep the two greatest commandments, it will keep us from making huge sinful mistakes.
3. When times get tough we sometimes are tempted by this thought, “If this is how God will treat me then I will do whatever I want.” How can gospel promises keep us from this temptation?

## Read Genesis 39:13-20a – God let Joseph suffer for doing right.

### Digging Deeper with Pastor Patterson

Joseph did the right thing and still he suffered for it. Why would God do that to him?

Joseph did not see the big picture about what God was doing, how would that make life hard for him?

How might the dreams have helped him?

### Applying God’s Word

1. When we suffer for doing right we sometimes doubt God’s love and direction for letting that happen. How does seeing the big picture in Joseph’s life help us?
2. Look at this verse from Malachi 4 for a “big picture” perspective. What truth will comfort us when the wicked seem to prosper and the righteous seem to only suffer.

<sup>1</sup> “Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the LORD Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them.” <sup>2</sup> But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. <sup>3</sup> Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things,” says the LORD Almighty. **Malachi 4:1-3**

3. Potiphar’s wife seemed to catch Joseph when no one else was around. How does Satan often tempt us to immorality when no one else is around? And how can Joseph’s words guide us when he does?

## Read Genesis 39:20b-23 – God blesses Joseph while he suffers for doing right.

### Digging Deeper with Pastor Patterson

How was imprisonment a “lesser” sentence for Joseph than most slaves received?

What was this prison like where Potiphar sent Joseph?

What reason does Moses give for the warden elevating Joseph?

The jailer had his reasons for elevating Joseph. What were God’s reasons?

How would you know God was with someone?

### Applying God’s Word

1. Read these verses from Paul’s sermon in Acts 17. How do they connect God’s ways for all people to our lives and Joseph’s?

*<sup>24</sup> “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. <sup>25</sup> And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. <sup>26</sup> From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. <sup>27</sup> God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. **Acts 17:24-27***

2. Tell the group about a time when you got into trouble for doing the right thing (or feared that you would). Explain the range of feelings you had toward God and the people that mistreated you.
3. Explain to each other how God was saving our souls by allowing Joseph to go through so many trials. What is the link? Then explain how our trials are leading toward the salvation of others too.

**Homework: For next Wednesday read Genesis 40 and 41. In that lesson we will see Joseph rise from prisoner to ruler.**