

GOD'S FORGIVENESS OUR FREEDOM

JACKIE OESCH

GENESIS 37-50

- LESSON 1: FAVORED – *THEIR FATHER LOVED HIM MORE***
- LESSON 2: SUCCESSFUL - *THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH***
- LESSON 3: INTERPRETER - *INTERPRETATIONS BELONG TO GOD***
- LESSON 4: RULER - *BRING YOUR YOUNGEST BROTHER TO ME***
- LESSON 5: BROTHER - *I AM JOSEPH!***
- LESSON 6: SON – *BRING MY FATHER DOWN HERE***

**“...I have stored up Your Word in my heart...”
Psalm 119:11**

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GETTING STARTED

You are embarking on an adventure that will shape the rest of your life. Your journey will be unique to you and will be determined in part by your eager and enthusiastic desire to grow in your understanding of the book called The Holy Bible. Your commitment to the study promises to enrich your life as God speaks to you through His Word.

As you study you are encouraged to have some recommended supplies on hand:

1. This Bible Study unit: *God's Forgiveness, Our Freedom*
2. English Standard Version of the Holy Bible (ESV). Note: If you are making a new purchase, look for a Bible, if possible, that has:
 - a. a cross-reference column preferably down the center of each page,
 - b. a Concordance usually found in the back of the Bible, and
 - c. a few basic maps also usually found in the back.
3. Pen or pencil
4. 3x5 or 4x6 index cards

With the three features listed in #2 you will be adequately supplied for your study and be ready to successfully navigate through these lessons. If, however, this is your first exposure to the Bible, you may want to consider beginning with the study entitled *Navigating the Bible*. This study provides navigational tools designed to help you develop skills and make you a more confident Bible student. *Navigating the Bible* may be downloaded at no cost or obligation from the CrossConnect Ministries website (www.crosscm.org). Although this study is recommended, it is not essential for success in studying *God's Forgiveness, Our Freedom*.

Do not hesitate to mark up your Bible. It's your Bible to study. Make it your own with your notes, your underlining, highlighting, circling and arrows! You may choose to use a notebook or tablet for recording thoughts, questions, and tracking your journey through the study.

The study material is written so that you are able to learn on your own. With a degree of self-discipline you will cover the material with little or no difficulty. At the same time, you will acquire new information, share new insights, and ask some challenging questions that will beg for answers. Anticipating this response you are encouraged to seriously consider inviting a couple of friends to study with you.

May you find joy in your study. May your heart be receptive as God speaks to you through His Word. May these Bible stories reassure you of His great love given to you through His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Editor's note: For clarification, capitalized pronouns reference God. i.e. "...what He said."

LESSON ONE

THEIR FATHER LOVED HIM MORE

GENESIS 37 – THE FAVORED

OVERVIEW OF LESSON 1

Overview	5
Introduction	6
Lesson 1: Genesis 37	
• Joseph and His Dreams	8
• Jealousy Between Brothers	8
• Joseph Sold	10
• Jacob Deceived	11
• Jacob's Grief	13

INTRODUCTION

Genesis 37 begins the story of Joseph, Jacob's son. So many consequences become evident because of the persistent sin that continued to tenaciously ravage this family. As the story progresses, watch for the emotional upheaval caused by a father's love for his favored son.

It's easy to identify the faults of these family members and be blinded by our own faults. We can fail to see the damage inflicted upon relationships because of our own longing to be special to someone who is particularly special to us. Who might God's Spirit bring to your mind as you study these lessons of Joseph and his brothers? Who are those you have struggled to live with in peace and harmony but find yourself captured by harmful and deceptive thoughts that keep invading your mind?

Did Joseph deserve the treatment his brothers gave him? What was at the root of the brothers' jealousy? Why couldn't they overlook the favoritism of their father and strive to live peaceably? Begin the study and learn from God's teachings through the life of Joseph.

Part 1

INTRODUCTION: The stage has been set. Jacob is living in the land of Canaan, specifically in the town of Hebron, with his family and his entire household. We learned in *God's Faithfulness, Our Hope* that God had blessed Jacob with great wealth and possessions. He had also blessed him with twelve sons who were born to his wives Leah and Rachel and their maidservants.

As we continue with the account of Jacob we will focus on one character, his son Joseph. We pick up the story in Genesis 37. Joseph is a teenager. He's 17 years old, a shepherd tending the flocks with his older brothers. Take some time to reflect on your life at 17. What was going on during that time of your life? What wisdom did you have, or think you had? What were some of the things you lacked? If you are younger, imagine what it may be like to be 17. What might you choose to set as personal marks of maturity as you approach 17?

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 37:1-11.

EXERCISE:

1. In verse 2 what does Joseph bring to his father? _____
We have names for characters who tell! What do we call them? _____
2. Verse 3a helps us to understand the relationship that has been nurtured through the years. _____

3. What did Jacob make that displayed his favoritism (verse 3b)? _____
Note: See Genesis 32:27-28.
4. What is the reaction of the brothers to their father's obvious display of favoritism? _____

TEACHING: O my goodness! Do you sense the tension? Jacob's favoritism has created resentment in these brothers toward Joseph who tattled on his older brothers to his father. Now their hatred toward their sibling begins to consume their thoughts. They can say nothing good about him. They show him no kindness. Should we be surprised that Jacob has a favorite son? Recall the environment in which Jacob was raised (Genesis 25:28). Genesis 29:30 tells us that he loved Rachel more than Leah. Now, as the perpetrator of favoritism, jealousy has permeated Jacob's family and hatred exists between his older sons and their younger brother.

EXERCISE: Joseph had a dream (Genesis 37:5).

1. What was his brothers' reaction when he shared his dream with them in verse 5? _____

2. In your own words, what was his dream (verse 7)? _____

3. His brothers questioned him. They asked, "Are you indeed to _____ over us? Or are you indeed to _____ over us?" To them this is what the dream implied.
4. Again, we cannot overlook that for the third time in these few verses we are told that these brothers _____ him. His dream and what he had said infuriated them. Underline the three mentions of the word hatred.
5. Sometimes one can't help but wonder if Joseph just didn't get it. What happens again in verse 9?

6. What is the dream this time? _____
7. What was Jacob's reaction to this dream (verse 10)? _____

8. In verse 11 what was the response of the brothers to his dream? _____
What was the response of his father? _____
9. Favoritism had turned to hatred and hatred was provoked by their jealousy. The father mulled the matter over in his mind. Their father *loved* him more. Their hatred and jealousy were rooted in their father's favoritism. He loved Joseph more than all his brothers... (Genesis 37:4)

Part 2

TEACHING: Jealousy is not a new word. As you recall in the previous unit of study, we were told that Rachel was jealous of her sister Leah who was able to conceive when she herself was barren. Rachel feared that she would be replaced in Jacob's heart by Leah. Jealousy paints a picture of hostility between warring factions. No sense of godliness exists. The environment is not reflecting God's attributes of love and kindness but rather the sense that the other does not deserve what he/she has been given. It's the burning obsession within one's self to possess what the other has. In Lesson 5 – Part 5 of the study entitled *God's Faithfulness, Our Hope* the jealousy between Rachel and Leah is discussed. The same sinfulness displayed by these two sisters has permeated the relationships of these brothers.

DIGGING DEEPER: Genesis 37:11 says, "His brothers were jealous of him." Note the cross-references that may be given in your Bible. Look up Acts 7:9. What does this New Testament reference

tell us is going to happen next? What does their jealousy lead them to do? _____

ASSIGNMENT: Return to Genesis 37 and read verses 12-25.

EXERCISE:

1. Verse 12: Where had the brothers gone? _____ What were they doing there?

Find Shechem on the map in the back of your Bible. On one of the first maps locate Shechem north of Jerusalem and north of Bethel. Estimate the distance to be between Hebron and Shechem. _____

2. Verse 13: What did Israel (Jacob) tell Joseph? _____
3. Verse 14: What were Joseph's instructions? _____
Recall what happened last time when Joseph came back with a report (verse 2). _____
4. Joseph had a long way to travel. Once he got there he had a difficult time locating his brothers. What does he find out in verses 15-17? _____
Dothan is approximately 10-15 miles further north, northwest. By car and freeway this distance doesn't seem very far but when we consider that Joseph is traveling by foot along the rugged and rocky soil of Canaan we get a different perspective of his journey.
5. He found his brothers in Dothan but what does verse 18 tell us? _____
6. Their hatred and jealousy had festered to the extent that they were ready to murder their brother. We probably shouldn't be surprised because in Genesis 4 we read how Cain's hatred and jealousy caused him to murder his brother Abel.
7. So, what did the brothers call out when they saw him coming? _____
8. What did they plot to do in verse 20? _____
9. What did they plan to concoct as a story? _____
It appears as though Joseph's dreams were the last straw. These brothers had had enough! They decided to show him what happens to such a dreamer.
10. Which brother tried to rescue him? _____ What did we learn about him in Genesis 29:32? _____
11. What did Rueben offer as an alternative plan? _____
12. What did he intend to do? _____

13. In verses 23-24 the brothers did just what they planned. They stripped him of the richly ornamented robe he was wearing and then took him and threw him into the cistern there in the desert. It was empty, without water.
14. While they were eating, what did they see in verse 25? _____
15. A caravan of Ishmaelites came. Who were the Ishmaelites (Genesis 16:11)? _____

Part 3

INTRODUCTION: The Ishmaelites were coming from Gilead. To locate Gilead on your map look for a region, not a town. If your map does not specify Gilead, the land is located east of the Jordan River. The northern part reaches to the Sea of Galilee (or the Kinnereth Sea) and the southern part stretching down to the northern tip of the Dead Sea (Salt Sea).

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 37:24-36.

EXERCISE:

1. The caravan was coming from Gilead and was traveling to Egypt. What were they carrying?

2. What did Judah propose to his brothers in verses 26-27? _____

3. And, how did the brothers respond? _____

TEACHING: At this point we need to review a few of words to refresh our memory:

- Ishmaelites: the descendants of Abraham’s son Ishmael (Genesis 16:16)
 - Midianites: the descendants of Abraham with his wife Keturah (Genesis 25:1-4)
 - Midian: The region far south and on the southeastern side of the Dead Sea, south of Edom
- This caravan of Ishmaelites supposedly began in the region of Midian, traveled to Gilead in the north and crossed over into Canaan where the brothers saw them coming near the town of Dothan.

Please note: These words are not essential for learning but becoming familiar with them will help to make the Bible seem much easier to understand. Perhaps you are learning about a part of the ancient world and its culture that you have never studied before. Keep trekking! You are doing well!

4. The Midianite merchants came by and what did the brothers do? _____

The merchants took Joseph to Egypt with them.

5. Meanwhile, who had missed all the action and the new development? _____
6. Reuben's rescue attempt failed. The cistern is empty. Joseph is gone! He is at a loss as to what he should do. What does he say (verse 30)? _____
7. Now, the big cover-up... In verse 31 what do the brother's do? _____

8. What do they tell their father in verse 32? _____

Part 4:

TEACHING: This is not the first cover-up story. Remember the first one. It took place in the Garden back in Genesis 3:7. When we have done something wrong, the immediate reaction is to cover-up and hide. Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together, made coverings for themselves, and hid in the bushes. There was no way these brothers could turn back on what they had done. Their plan to kill Joseph backfired. They were prisoners of their own evil plot. They had taken the robe of the one they despised, dipped it in blood and presented it to their father. Their father received the blood-stained robe that he had made for his most favored son who was now believed to be dead.

REFLECTION: What would it have been like to plot the murder of your own brother? How bad would things have to get in order to want to kill someone? These brothers must have had their jealousy burning for the entire 17 years of Joseph's life. Sin that festers and grows in an individual's life without ever being put in check will end in death.

1. Consider what St. Paul says in Galatians 5:19-21. What are the acts of the sinful nature that Paul lists? _____

2. What is Paul's warning regarding these acts? _____
3. Proverbs 16:25 tells us that what seems right to us may only lead to _____
4. In Romans 8:10-14 speaks about Christ living in you and the obligation we have. Verse 13 says that if we live by the sinful nature, what will happen? _____
5. But, if we live by the Spirit...we _____.

MEMORIZATION: Romans 8:10-14 is powerful.

1. Read these verses again very carefully and try to understand the love that God has for you. He wants His abundant life for you!
2. Write verses 13 and 14 on an index card.

3. As you memorize these verses this week ask yourself these application questions:
 - a. What are those areas of my life in which I find myself living according to the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21)?
 - b. What are those areas of my life in which I know God is working in my life leading me and enabling me to live by the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:22, 23)?
4. Write your answers to these questions on the back of your card. Keep the card handy for memorizing and for making notes throughout this week.

Part 5

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

1. With which of the brothers would you be able to identify? Reuben, Judah, or one of the others? Would you have been one of the agreeable brothers (verse 27)? Why or why not?

 Would you have stood up in opposition to the group knowing that was the right thing to do? What makes you think you would? _____

 Would you have been one of the instigators? What would your plan have been for getting rid of your kid brother who just couldn't get it right? _____

 Would you have been Joseph's advocate? In spite of how he got on your nerves what would you have said to your brothers? _____
2. Reuben was the oldest and therefore the one responsible for this young brother. Have you ever been given a responsibility for another person and then let yourself and everyone else down? What did that feel like? _____

3. Can you identify with Judah? Judah wanted to get rid of Joseph but didn't want to kill him. He told his brothers they would gain nothing if Joseph's blood was on their hands. But, would you be able to stand up against these angry brothers? What might be some of your thoughts?

4. What kind of character does it take to go against the sinful nature expressed in jealousy and now jealousy is considering thoughts of murder? _____

5. When are those times in my life when jealousy plays havoc with my emotions and rather than act lovingly by encouraging and supporting others and looking out for their best interests I engage in

hurtful conversations, use destructive words, malign the truth to create lies, and allow my mind to harbor thoughts of anger and retribution. _____

PRAYER: O Lord, all too often I become ensnared in my own jealous thoughts. I am jealous of the position of others, the love of others, the friendships and relationships of others, the talents, abilities, interests and skills of others. I long to be appreciated for who I am but I allow scandalous thoughts to have their way with me. I find I'm not much different than Joseph's brothers. Forgive me, Lord Jesus. I cannot make any of the changes I want in my life on my own. I am totally dependent upon You to work in my life with Your Holy Spirit leading me and enabling me to live as a child of the Heavenly Father. I especially ask for help in this specific area of my life _____

Thank You for freeing me from the guilt I have carried from my past. Your freedom enables me to _____

TEACHING: The actions of these brothers had consequences. Their father was devastated. He recognized the robe. He envisioned a ferocious animal tearing apart his son and devouring him. In his grief, Jacob tore his own clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for Joseph for many days. All of his sons and daughters gathered but he refused to be comforted. He wept and said that he would go to his grave _____ for his son. (Genesis 37:33-35)

We may have consequences to endure because of past wrongs we have committed against others. We need to remember that God is faithful and will never leave us nor forsake us even during our most trying times. The loving arms of our heavenly Father enfold us. We, too, can enfold those around us who are enduring hard times because of wrongs committed.

Jacob was a deceiver. He was raised in a home with deception. He deceived his brother and his father. He spent time running scared from his brother. He was deceived by his uncle and denied the wife he was originally promised. Now his own sons have deceived him. Jealousy, envy, deception are all the work of the evil one. Yet, despite the massive character flaws of these family members God still enacts His will through these people. As the story of Joseph continues we will see God as the Victorious One.

LESSON TWO

THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH

GENESIS 39 – THE SUCCESSFUL ONE

OVERVIEW OF LESSON 2

Overview	15
Introduction	16
Lesson 2: Genesis 39	
• Joseph in the House of Potiphar	17
• Potiphar Blessed Because of Joseph	19
• Joseph Encounters Temptation	20
• Joseph’s Refusal to Sin	21
• Joseph Suffers for Righteousness	22

INTRODUCTION

In Lesson 1 we learned that Joseph was sold by his brothers to the Ishmaelites from Midian who then sold him to the Egyptians. Now in this lesson we are told that he ends up as a servant in the house of Potiphar. Learn about his work and responsibilities within Potiphar's household. How did he handle all of the mistreatment from his brothers, the journey with the Midianites, and life as a slave in a foreign land? And, by the way, where was God in all of this?

The plot thickens. There's trouble in Potiphar's house. Watch for Joseph's response to more unjust treatment. Learn from him how to handle those times when you know you are doing or have done the right thing but the consequences for doing right seem so unjust. Watch what happens to Joseph's relationship with God. What would be your response to injustice? What might be Joseph's lesson for you as he models godly responses to ungodly circumstances?

And things seem to deteriorate even more. God, why would you let such a godly man endure such unjust treatment? Did you forget him? Does Joseph feel forgotten? If he was the "successful one" was all of this suffering necessary?

Watch God at work! Learn about Him and His regard for suffering as you see Him walking with Joseph through these difficult days.

Part 1

INTRODUCTION: Already in Genesis 37 we learn that arrogance, deceit, and even thoughts of murder have permeated Jacob's family. A father grieving inconsolably is left holding the blood stained robe of his favored son. He has been deceived and now believes that Joseph was killed by some ferocious beast. The brothers have disposed of their arrogant kid brother and now have concocted a cruel story to cover up their malicious act. Although they spared Joseph's life by selling him to Midianites (Ishmaelites) caravanning through the territory on their way to Egypt, nevertheless, the father only knows that his favored son is dead.

So, what is happening to Joseph? We leave Jacob and his sons and pick up with Genesis 39. Genesis 37:36 tells us that, in the meantime, while all of this grieving was going on at Jacob's house the Midianites (Ishmaelites) took Joseph to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, a man who was one of Pharaoh's officials and the captain of the guard.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 39:1-6a. Verse 1 is almost verbatim a repeat of Genesis 37:36.

EXERCISE:

1. What are the first things we learn about Joseph in verse 2?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
2. What captured Potiphar's attention and ultimately gave Joseph favor with him (verse 3)?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
3. What responsibilities did Joseph have as Potiphar's attendant (verse 4)?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
4. The Egyptian and all his household were blessed because of Joseph (verse 5). In verses 2-5 underline or highlight in your Bible all that is mentioned about the Lord. What do we learn from these verses about the effect God's blessing has on His people and, as a result, the blessing He bestows on others? _____

5. The end of verse 5 tells us that _____

6. Because the Lord was blessing everything, what became Joseph's responsibilities, his assignment? _____
7. What became Potiphar's sole concern (verse 6)? _____

Part 2

PERSONAL APPLICATION: The people of God live under the blessing of God. However, not only does God bless His people but through them He blesses others are blessed as well.

1. What did God say to Abram in Genesis 12:2-3? _____

2. God said that Abram would be a blessing and that God would bless those who blessed him...and that all peoples on earth would be blessed through him. Consider what implication this has on your life:
 - a. Who are those who live within your circle of influence, for example, neighbors, coworkers, friends? Name specific individuals. _____

 - b. Consider ways in which they are blessed by God through you. Consider, for example, safety and protection, honesty and truth, character and authenticity. How are their lives affected by God in these and other areas as He touches their lives through you? _____

MEMORIZATION: For our sake and the sake of others it is important that we keep God's Word always before us. As we continue to study we learn more and more about who He is and how He wants to bless us and bless others through us. The chosen memory assignment is Psalm 1:1-3.

1. In verse 1 what are the three environments we are to avoid?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
2. What then does the psalmist tell us is to become our delight in verse 2?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
3. And, finally, what is the imagery given in verse 3? _____

4. Describe the tree. Where is it planted? What is its condition? _____

5. Consider once again, as the blessed people of God, who are those who are blessed by God because of us? Another way is to ask the question, who are those who have built their nests in our/my limbs and found refuge and safety in our/my branches? _____

Write these verses on an index card and enjoy the opportunity for God to show you ways in which you become a tree planted by streams of water, strong and vibrant, a tree providing shade for those worn and tired and a tree providing safe and secure branches in which others find their rest and comfort. Note your experiences on the back of the card and thank the Lord for the privilege of being a means by which He has chosen to bless others.

PRAYER: O Lord, You blessed Potiphar and his entire household through the life of Joseph. You blessed all that he owned, everything in his house and fields. Joseph brought Your loving presence to Potiphar's life. Open my eyes to see that You are blessing me and through my life You are blessing those who don't even know who You are. May my life be lived with intention, with a conscious purpose of enabling You to bless the lives of others as You have so faithfully blessed mine. Certain individuals come to mind for whom I pray. May they come to know You the Source of all blessings. _____

Part 3

INTRODUCTION: Just because we are in a relationship with God through faith in our Jesus does not mean that we are exempt from encountering evil in our world. You may recall from your study of Genesis 3 in *God's Plan, Our Choice*, a battle rages and the evil one is after our souls. The first six verses of Genesis 39 tell us the good news of God's blessings on the life of Joseph and now the test of his faith comes. And, the question remains: Are blessings only those things which seem right and feel good? How does God bless this man of faith through difficult circumstances? Can such circumstances bring the blessings of God?

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 39:6b-23.

EXERCISE:

1. How is Joseph described in verse 6b? _____

2. What are the very next words in verse 7? What is the temptation that Potiphar's wife poses?

Potiphar's wife notices Joseph's outward appearance and becomes the temptress.

3. Verse 8: Joseph refuses her. Write out his response. Carefully consider what he says:

To whom was he responsible? _____

His master trusted Joseph with his entire household and therefore had no concerns about anything in his house. Joseph was second in command. His master withheld nothing from him, except his wife. Then he asks the question: _____

4. Joseph was a healthy young man. He endured the same temptations as other men. Potiphar's wife knew this and day after day she made the same invitation. What does the Bible say about Joseph in verse 10? _____

5. What does this scene tell us about Potiphar's wife? _____

DIGGING DEEPER: Let's take time to look at another section of Scripture that deals with this very same subject. King Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs for his son. In Proverbs 6 and 7 Solomon warns his son against the adulteress. You may choose to read this entire section but for our study let's consider the wisdom he shares with his son in order to protect him from such situations, from such encounters with the adulteress woman and the prostitute. Carefully read Proverbs 6:20-35. Keep in mind the situation in which Joseph has found himself.

1. What does Solomon tell his son is the purpose of his parents' commands and teachings? _____

2. In verse 24 from whom does he say these teaching are to protect his son? _____

3. Verse 26: What does Solomon say about the prostitute and the adulteress woman? _____

4. Verses 29-35: What are some of the consequences of one who sleeps with another man's wife? _____

King Solomon is very candid with his son. His words of truth are a teaching for us as well. We are encouraged to bind them on our hearts forever for they will guide us, watch over us, and speak to us.

Part 4

EXERCISE: Turn back to Genesis 39:11.

1. What happened one day when Joseph went to attend to his duties? _____

She in essence ordered him to sleep with her. He fled from her presence but in doing so left behind his _____ (verse 12) from which she created her own story. She lied. Her sin of lust and then her scorn for Joseph because he refused her and fled caused her to contrive a story that would cause Joseph great harm. What was her story in verses 13-18? _____

2. In verse 19 what did she tell Potiphar when he came home? _____

How did he respond? _____

Are you surprised (Proverbs 6:34)? _____

3. What did Potiphar do with Joseph (verse 20)? _____

REFLECTION: In the first verses of Genesis 39 we learn what an honorable young man Joseph was. He was handsome, dependable, reliable, truthful, and trustworthy. He even refused to sleep with his master's wife regardless of how convenient it would have been to yield to her temptation. Now Joseph is treated like a criminal. He is thrown into prison by the very man who had trusted him implicitly, the man who recognized Joseph as one blessed by the Lord. He believed his wife's lie. His confinement was the place where the king's prisoners were kept, certainly not the place of choice.

Why Joseph? He was such a fine young man, why him? So, where was God? Was God only with him when he was out and about, living in the home of his master and hobnobbing around with the rich and famous? Why would he let such an awful thing happen to such a good man? You may think that if this is the way God operates then I've got some serious issues to discuss with Him.

Imagine that you are Joseph. You are the one who is now in the dark dungeon with the dregs of society, with the king's prisoners. What would be the questions going through your mind? Would you be crying out to this God of yours? So far, the life which your brothers destined for you hasn't been too bad, but now this! _____

DIGGING DEEPER: We resent unjust treatment. We become bitter toward those who mistreat us. In 1 Peter 2:21-25 we are called to a higher calling. Look closely at these verses as Peter makes reference to Jesus who is our example to follow.

1. Peter says that we have been called to be like Christ. He _____ and left us an _____ that we should _____ in His steps (verse 21).
2. Then Peter quotes Isaiah 53:9. Jesus committed no sin (verse 22). What are we told He did when they hurled their insults and when He suffered? _____

3. Verse 23 goes on to say that He _____
What does that mean?! Jesus was carrying out the will of His Father. Jesus, therefore, entrusted Himself to the Father who He knew to be righteous and just in His judgment.
4. Jesus was willing to carry our sins in His body on the cross so that we might (verse 24) _____ to _____ and _____ for _____. You and I are healed because of what He did for us. He repaired our broken relationship with the Father. It doesn't exist anymore for those who believe that what Jesus did was done for them. We were like _____ who had gone astray but have now returned to the _____ and _____ of our souls (verse 25).

Part 5

EXERCISE: Back in Genesis 39 we find that the chapter ends with Joseph in prison.

1. Once again, in verse 21 we read almost the identical five words of verse 2. What does this verse say? _____
2. The verse goes on to tell us how the Lord manifested His presence while Joseph was in prison.

3. In verse 23 we realize again that Joseph's conduct was recognized by the warden. What responsibilities did he give to Joseph? _____

4. The warden must have been relieved to have Joseph under his supervision. Verse 23 tells us that the warden _____
He knew that the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.
5. Note the similarities between what Potiphar had observed about Joseph (verse 3) and what the warden observed (verse 23). _____

REFLECTION: One can't help but wonder what Joseph did that caught the eye of the warden. As a prisoner what could he have possibly done that would be worth noticing. Joseph has been made the victim of lies and has been treated unjustly. He has been imprisoned by his former master, a man burning with anger. He has no idea how long he will be left in the place, possibly the rest of his life. We dare not forget that he is a stranger, an alien in a foreign land. The culture and customs of the Egyptians was much different than that of tending the sheep his father owned and living as a member of a nomadic tribe. Egypt was considered to be an advanced society, progressive, and a community of intellectuals. Pharaoh was Egypt's ruler, a far cry from his father with whom he was intimately acquainted, even favored.

If you had been imprisoned with him, what do you think you would have observed about him that would cause you to describe him as kind? What do you think would be your experience with him that would enable you to say to others that the Lord was with him? _____

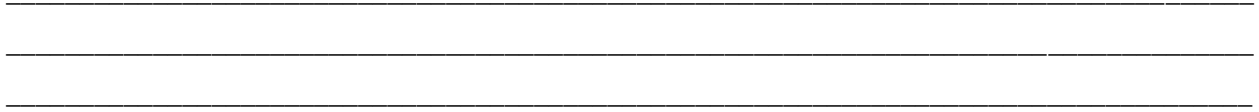
PERSONAL APPLICATION:

1. Turn to 1 Peter 3:9. Joseph is an example for us to follow. Obviously, he was a godly man who caught the eye of many. We especially notice that he caught the eye of those in authority over him. Verse 9 seems to be the way Joseph tried to live since the days when his brothers sold him and he was sent off to Egypt with the caravan. Write out this verse: _____

2. Joseph saw his life as a life called to bless the lives of others. His treatment of others was not dependent upon how he was treated. He followed the example of Jesus and entrusted himself to Him who judges justly (1 Peter 2:23). How might these verses and this story of Joseph challenge you? _____

3. How might your attitude, your choice of words, and your thoughtful actions make a difference in the life of another? _____
4. What challenge does that pose for you as you consider yourself blessed by God in order to be a blessing to others? _____

PRAYER: I want to be like Joseph, Lord. I want to make a difference in the lives of others. I want to permeate my world with Your love so that Your kindness becomes a means of attracting others to You. When times are difficult, keep me from discouragement and bitterness. Enable me to speak well of those in authority over me and use me as a means of bringing Your love to them. _____



LESSON THREE

INTERPRETATIONS BELONG TO GOD

GENESIS 40-41 – THE INTERPRETER

OVERVIEW OF LESSON 3

Overview	25
Introduction	26
Lesson 3: Genesis 40-41	
• The Dreams of Others	27
• Joseph Interprets Their Dreams	28
• Pharaoh’s Dreams and Interpretations	29
• Joseph’s Master Plan for Egypt	30
• Joseph Set Over the Land of Egypt	32

INTRODUCTION

Joseph has endured many hardships; however, throughout these years the Lord has been faithful to him. Now something strange happens. Learn what develops while he is in prison and watch how God uses him to preserve the people and the land of Egypt.

We can wonder if all of these things that happened in Joseph's life were necessary. Couldn't God have kept suffering and pain from him? Then why didn't He? Be alert and watch for Joseph's response to these trials. Notice his attitude through each situation. Observe his attitude toward the jailer who was in authority over him. Consider how he regarded his fellow prisoners? Look for his attitude toward the responsibilities he was given, responsibilities that were handed down to him by Pharaoh himself.

Exodus 40 and 41 do not bring us to the end of the story. As you proceed take time to review all that has gone on in Joseph's life during these years and carefully give witness to God's enduring faithfulness to Him.

Part 1

INTRODUCTION: We ended Lesson 2 with Joseph unjustly thrown into prison because of the lies of Potiphar’s wife. He was in a position of honor and entrusted with everything that belonged to his master. He refused to yield to the repeated temptations to commit adultery with his master’s wife and fled from her. She lied. Her husband believed her lies and now Joseph finds himself in prison with no indication that he will ever be released.

In spite of Joseph’s unjust treatment, we learn that God remains faithful to him. The Bible tells us that even while in prison the Lord was with him. He showed kindness to Joseph and granted him favor with the prison warden who put Joseph in charge of the prisoners. He was held responsible for all that was done there. The warden knew that the Lord was with Joseph because everything Joseph did resulted in success.

But, what difference does being in charge and being successful make when one is in prison? If God was with him, wouldn’t He get Joseph out of there? One can’t help but wonder what one’s own attitude would be if confronted with similar circumstances. So we ask: Does God deliver us *from* our circumstances or does He enter *into* our circumstances?

ASSIGNMENT: The story resumes in Genesis 40 and 41. Because of the amount of material remaining to be covered in this unit we will not be able to study all of the readings in great detail. The questions in the exercises will help to move you through these chapters. You are encouraged to read, study, and continue to record questions in your notebook for your own long term study. Begin by reading Genesis 40.

EXERCISE: This chapter is about two officials who worked for the king and now are in prison.

1. Who are these men and what have they done? _____

2. Where do they end up? _____
To whom does the captain of the guard assign them? _____
3. What happened according to verse 5? _____

4. (Verses 6-8) What does Joseph notice the next morning? _____

- What did he ask them? _____
- What was their answer? _____
5. Joseph believed that the interpretation of dreams belonged to God. What did he tell them (verse 8)? _____
 6. Verses 9-11: What was the cupbearers dream? _____

 7. What was Joseph's interpretation in verses 12-14? _____

 8. What did Joseph ask the cupbearer to do for him in verse 14? _____

 9. What else did Joseph tell him in verse 15? _____

 10. Verses 16-17: What was the chief baker's dream? _____

 11. What was Joseph's interpretation in verses 18-19? _____

 12. What was the occasion in verse 20? _____
 What happens to the cupbearer in verse 21? _____
 To the chief baker? _____
 13. Everything happened just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation of their dreams. What was the one problem in verse 23? _____

Part 2

INTRODUCTION: Once again it seems that Joseph gets treated unfairly. The chief cupbearer is so excited about all that has transpired in the last three days that he has totally forgotten about Joseph and his request to be remembered before Pharaoh. One almost gets the sense that he has forgotten to say "thank you" and has failed to remember the one who gave to him the good news at a time when he was feeling dejected and hopeless. Would this be a time to consider remembering someone who at a time when you were feeling dejected and hopeless encouraged you or brought you good news?

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 41:1-40.

EXERCISE: God again communicated with people through dreams. We saw this when Joseph had the two dreams he shared with his family in Genesis 37. Then in chapter 40 the chief cupbearer and chief baker each had a dream. Now, two years later, the dreams continue. Dreams held significant meaning for people who lived at this time in this part of the world. If the dreams were properly interpreted, it was believed that they would reveal the truth about the dreamer's future. As we proceed with these verses, keep in mind that most near eastern cultures connected weather and crops to divine intervention. The explanation for the famine was never about the natural world but rather always something about God/god(s) doing something to people.

1. Verses 1-4: Who has the dream this time? _____
What is his dream? _____

2. Pharaoh fell asleep again and had another dream. What is this dream? _____

3. What does Pharaoh do in verse 8? _____
What was the outcome of his search for an interpretation? _____

TEACHING: Finally! The cupbearer recalls what happened to him in prison just before he was released. He tells Pharaoh about the young Hebrew who was imprisoned with him, a servant of the captain of the guard. Pharaoh summons for Joseph to be brought to him. He is brought out of the dungeon, shaved, probably bathed, given a change of clothes, and now stands before the king.

EXERCISE: Begin with Genesis 41:15.

1. What does he want from Joseph? _____
2. What does Joseph reply (verse 16)? _____
3. Verses 17-24: Pharaoh shares his dreams with Joseph. What is the last thing he says in verse 24?

4. Verse 25: Joseph makes two comments before he interprets Pharaoh's dreams.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
5. Verses 26-27: What is the interpretation of his dreams? What is God about to do? _____

6. Joseph then tells Pharaoh the meaning of the dream in his own words. What does he say that God has revealed to Pharaoh? _____

Part 3

TEACHING: God is going to provide seven years of great abundance over the land of Egypt followed by seven years of such a severe famine that Egypt will not be able to remember the years of abundance. We are told in verse 32 that God gave the same dream to Pharaoh in two forms because 1) God had “firmly decided” to proceed with His plan and 2) He would carry out His plan soon.

EXERCISE: In these next verses Joseph gives to Pharaoh some very direct instructions.

1. Joseph presented the plan to the king (verses 33-36):
 - a. What were the characteristics that Pharaoh was to look for in the man who was to be put in charge? _____
 - b. Who were the others Pharaoh was to appoint and what was their responsibility (verses 34-36)? _____

2. How did Pharaoh and his officials respond to Joseph’s plan? _____
3. What was their concern in verse 38? _____
4. Verse 39: What was Pharaoh’s decision? _____
5. What character qualities in Joseph did Pharaoh recognize and acknowledge? _____

6. What was Joseph’s responsibility? _____
7. Who was to submit to him? _____
8. To whom was Joseph to submit? _____

REFLECTION: Joseph, this young foreigner who had been brought to Egypt and sold as a slave, is now the second-in-command in all of Egypt. Everyone is ordered to submit to him except Pharaoh himself.

1. So, what do you think? Was all that he has gone through these many years worth the position that Pharaoh has now bestowed on him? Simply, was the blessing at the end really worth the suffering? _____
2. What is the problem with asking that question? _____

Maybe it's not too difficult for you to identify with Joseph. Maybe you have been overlooked for a job promotion. You may have thought you deserved a higher military rank and were passed over. Maybe you thought yourself more qualified to receive a job promotion but the position was given to someone else who lacked both experience and expertise. Maybe you have been mistreated by others as Joseph was with his brothers. Maybe your family passed you off as a dreamer, one who would never amount to much. Or, maybe you were not even regarded as someone worthy to remain within the family and were cast off to relatives or made wards of the state. Maybe your circumstances weren't so drastic but real nevertheless. Maybe you received the lower grade on a project or some other assignment. Or, maybe you did not feel appreciated for the conscientious care you gave to someone in need. Or, maybe a friend or acquaintance did not remember you to someone who could have made your life a lot easier.

After studying this part of Joseph's life and observing his responses to situations in his life, we cannot help but reflect on our own responses to situations. As a servant both to Potiphar and the prison warden it was reported that the Lord was with Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on him and He enabled Joseph to succeed in whatever he did. Through his life experiences God prepared him for the position that Pharaoh gave to him. First, he was put in charge of Potiphar's household and fields. Then, the prison warden put him in charge of the prison and everything that went on inside. Now, Joseph is made responsible for the survival of the entire land of Egypt. Grumbling and complaining is the easy part. Recognizing God's hand of blessing on all that we do is a greater challenge. This calls us to a higher level. We can say, "Rise above it!" This holds much the same thought. We are called to rise above our circumstances to both see and trust that God is with us giving us success in all that we do.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Take time to reflect on your personal life circumstances.

1. Recall those times when you felt overlooked and underappreciated. What is a circumstance you recall? _____
2. What was your expectation? _____
3. What actually happened? _____
4. What was your response to the situation? _____
5. What might you have chosen to have done differently? Why? _____

6. As you reflect on this situation in your past, how might you find its application to your life in the present? _____
7. As you reflect, where do you see God with you in your present circumstance of life? _____

PRAYER: O Lord, I confess that sometimes I place too high a value on my own talents and abilities. I believe I deserve position and power and all too often I believe I deserve it now. Joseph is an example of humility. He served as a servant to both Potiphar and the warden. You have given me a variety of opportunities to serve as a servant to employers, managers, and other authority figures in my life as well. Joseph lived believing that You were at work in and through him. Open my heart to believe that You are with me as well. May the successes that You give to me be a means for others to encounter You in their lives as well. _____

Part 4

INTRODUCTION: Pharaoh has chosen Joseph to be in charge of the entire land of Egypt. Genesis 41:41-45 tells about his induction into office. We have similar ceremonies when a person is chosen by a congregation to serve them. First, the pastor is chosen and then installed. At that time the stole (usually a colorful cloth placed around the pastor's neck) representing to the people the office of the ministry is given and the responsibilities are then assumed by this individual. Pharaoh has chosen Joseph and now the installation happens in which Pharaoh makes known to the people his choice and his expectations of the people.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 41:41-57.

EXERCISE:

1. Verse 41: What does Pharaoh say to Joseph? _____
2. How was Joseph adorned as the second-in-command?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
3. Finally, he had his ride in a chariot! Imagine the scene. What an entourage! Joseph is paraded in Egypt for all the people to see and recognize as the second-in-command in all of Egypt! Pharaoh declares himself as Pharaoh and makes the decree that Joseph is to be obeyed.
4. He gives Joseph a new name. What is it? _____
5. Pharaoh also gives him a wife. What is her name? _____

REFLECTION: Do you think Joseph deserved all of this? Do you think that all of this pomp and circumstance was a little overdone? Or, was it? Think of the tremendous responsibility Pharaoh

bestowed on him. What did all of Pharaoh's accolades communicate to the people? People were to make way for him; they were to bow down to Joseph as they would had Pharaoh himself passed by.

When we consider that Joseph had been working in the dungeon only a few days earlier, we cannot help but acknowledge the greatness of our God. Certainly He is the one who pulled Joseph out of the muck and mire of the prison and placed him in a large place.

MEMORIZATION: Psalm 40:1-3 might describe Joseph's situation and may be words that you can identify with as you deal with the circumstances of your own life. The psalm writer speaks about patience as he cries out for he knows that the Lord hears him. Joseph, too, dealt with the muck and mire of the cistern, the trip to Egypt with the caravan, and the prison in which he was forgotten. This day of his installation was a new day. The Lord put a new song in his heart, a song acknowledging that many would see and fear and put their trust in the Lord. Write these verses on an index card. Let them minister to you with hope and purpose. Let them comfort and reassure you that the Lord's presence is with you. He has not forgotten or abandoned you even when you may think that the slimy pit holds you as its prisoner.

Part 5

EXERCISE: Genesis 41:46-57

1. According to verse 46 Joseph is 30 years old when he begins work in Pharaoh's service.

Describe these years of plenty: _____

2. Verse 50: We are told that during the years of plenty Joseph and Asenath were blessed with two sons. (Look at the footnotes for additional meanings.) Their sons names were:

- a. _____, which means _____
- b. _____, which means _____

3. How does a year or years of abundance affect one's family apart from food needs? Think about stress, general well-being, attitude, etc. _____

4. What difference would a year or two of abundance make in your life? _____

5. When the years of abundance ended the years of famine began. What are we told about Egypt in verse 54? _____

TEACHING: When the Egyptians began to feel the effects of the famine, the people came to Pharaoh who directed them to Joseph and instructed them to do whatever Joseph told them. As the intensity of the famine increase the storehouses were opened and the grain was sold. Then comes a little point of intrigue... We are told in verse 57 that all the countries around were affected by the famine. Only Egypt had food. As a result, the people from all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph. “The famine was severe over all the earth.”

REFLECTION: OK. It’s time to use your imagination. Who is this famine going to bring to Egypt?

Will God use the famine to restore the brokenness that exists between the father and his sons? Jacob and his sons are starving in Canaan and Joseph is doling out the bounty stored in Egypt. Joseph has forgotten his brothers and his father’s entire household (verse 51). He acknowledges that it is the Lord who has brought him through his suffering and made him fruitful in the land of Egypt, the very land in which he suffered.

At this point in the story we become more cognizant of the suffering Joseph endured while in Egypt. He didn’t speak Egyptian when he arrived. He was a stranger to the culture and customs of the people. He was regarded as an adulterer and imprisoned for it. Yet, we are only told that the Lord was with Him. Now when he is bestowed honor by Pharaoh himself and children are born to him we hear the cry of his heart through the years, the cry, “What have I done to deserve all of this?” And, now as second-in-command of all the land, we can hear again the same cry of his heart but with a different sound, “What have I done to deserve all of this?”

God’s grace has been with Joseph all of these years. He was acquainted with the God of his fathers who was far different than the gods of the Egyptians. This God was merciful to him. He never abandoned him, even when mistreated. God used all of his life experiences to shape and mold him into the man he was to become for without his knowledge God prepared Joseph to be reunited to his father and his father’s household.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

1. Has a bitter separation kept you away from loved ones? Is there someone in particular that comes to mind? _____
 2. Can you think of ways in which you have matured and now are able to acknowledge that it is time for you to begin the process of becoming reunited? _____
-

3. How might you reconsider your sufferings of the past in a way that enables you to consider the prospects of the future? _____

4. How has your situation changed since the bitter separation you endured took place? _____

PRAYER: In your own words lift up to the Lord the cry of your heart, “What have I done to deserve all of this?” _____

And, with thanksgiving in your heart for the freedom that God has granted to you through His grace in your life, lift up to the Lord your heart’s prayer of gratitude, “What have I done to deserve all of this?”

LESSON FOUR

BRING YOUR YOUNGEST BROTHER TO ME

GENESIS 42 AND 43 – THE RULER

OVERVIEW OF LESSON 4

Overview	37
Introduction	38
Lesson 4: Genesis 42-43	
• Jacob's Sons Sent to Egypt	39
• Treated as Strangers and Spies	40
• Joseph's Generosity	41
• Unresolved Guilt	43
• Back Home Again in Canaan	44
• Joseph and Benjamin	46

INTRODUCTION

Not only was the famine severe in Egypt but it was severe over the entire region and that included Canaan where Jacob lived with his sons. The word was out: Egypt had food! What would this mean for Jacob and his sons and their families? What would Joseph's reaction be when he saw his brothers? How would you expect him to behave toward them? What if they had been your brothers and treated you as they had treated Joseph?

Joseph had been imprisoned innocently. Observe how these brothers had been tortured and imprisoned in their own minds. Find out what had bound them up all these years. What had robbed them of the fullness of life?

Joseph made some stern demands on these brothers. Discover their reaction. What did they conclude? If they were found out by the governor, what would be the ramifications? Would they be denied food? Would their father find out the truth about them? Would they be held as prisoners or even killed for what they had done to their brother Joseph?

A question remains for us as well: What are those things which we have done, or not done, that have us imprisoned? What keeps us bound up? What in our lives has not been resolved? We need to ask ourselves: Am I missing out on life because I am living behind the locked doors of my guilt and shame and believe I have no way of escape? Discover the heart of Joseph and learn the peace of the Lord that passes all understanding.

Part 1

INTRODUCTION: Joseph has traveled the gamut. At seventeen years of age he found himself in the bottom of a cistern and at the age of thirty he is the second-in-command in Egypt, the land of the Pharaohs. The country has also gone the gamut. During the past seven years the land has known such abundance that the storehouses overflowed with huge quantities of grain. Now seven years later the effects of the famine are felt by everyone in Egypt and the surrounding world. Because Pharaoh heeded Joseph's words of warning the entire country has been organized and is prepared for this the worst of times. The word is out. Egypt has food!

Consider how this news would have benefitted Egypt economically, politically, and even with regards to their fertility gods. _____

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 42.

EXERCISE: The situation is bad in Canaan and Jacob has learned that there is grain in Egypt.

1. In verses 1 and 2 Jacob sounds frustrated with his sons. Twenty years have passed since the brothers sold Joseph. They are grown men and at an age when one would think they should be taking care of their aging father. Instead, what do you sense about the situation? _____

2. What does Jacob tell them to do? _____
3. Verse 3: All but _____ traveled to Egypt to buy grain. Why did he remain at home? _____
4. In verse 6 it clearly states that Joseph as governor was the one who sold the grain. The brothers arrive and encounter Joseph. What is the first thing they do? _____

5. What are we told in verse 7? _____
Joseph recognized them but didn't let on that he knew who they were. Instead, how did he treat them? _____
6. What did he ask them? _____
7. The brothers were looking for food to buy and certainly not for their favored brother whom they had grown to despise and hate. Circumstances, however, had changed. The tables were

turned. Joseph knew they just wanted food. Look at the cross-references following the word dreams in verse 9. Turn to Genesis 37:5, 9 and reread the account of Joseph's dream.

8. Joseph continues to treat them as strangers. What accusation does he make against them in verse 9? _____

9. Ten men and Joseph but Joseph is the governor. Joseph held the trump card. He had the grain they needed to take back to their father in Canaan. What does Joseph insist?

10. Verses 11 and 13: What do they reveal about their family to Joseph? _____

11. Joseph is relentless. He continues to accuse them of being spies. In verse 15 what test does he order? _____
12. Why do you think he would make this demand? What did Joseph need to know? _____

13. Verses 16-17: What were Joseph's orders? _____

He continues to treat them harshly. He wants to test the truth of what they said. He wanted to know if things back home were really the way they said they were.

Part 2

EXERCISE CONTINUES: It's the third day of their confinement.

1. What do you think these brothers thought and talked about during these days? Did they think they would ever get out? What was going on that this governor would deal so harshly with them? If you were in custody with them, how do you think the conversation might have gone? _____

2. Joseph changes his orders. What are the men told?
 - a. Verse 18: _____
 - b. Verse 19: _____

 - c. Verse 20: _____

3. Verses 21-22 reveal the pain and guilt these brothers have carried all these years. In your own words, what was the guilt they carried? _____

4. Reuben wanted to vindicate himself. We could probably call him Mr. I-Told-You-So. What was the blame? _____
 Do you think this was the first time he said what he did? _____
 What was his accusation? _____
5. What is the interesting revelation in verse 23? Had you thought of this before now? _____

6. What is Joseph's reaction to the brothers' conversation? _____
 After he emotionally pulled himself together again what was ordered? _____

7. Verse 25: Joseph was generous. How did he express his generosity?
 1. _____,
 2. _____, and
 3. _____.

Part 3

REFLECTION: Joseph gave to his brothers what they didn't deserve. They had wanted to kill him but he showed kindness towards them. Turn back to Genesis 39:21. Joseph is in prison. The verse tells us that God was with Joseph. Then it is says that God showed him kindness and granted him favor. Reflect for a moment on the scene in Genesis 42:25. We've noted Joseph's generosity. He showed kindness to his brothers. As God was kind to Joseph throughout the years so Joseph demonstrated kindness to his brothers. It is plain to see that God has endeared Joseph's heart to his brothers. He had not harbored bitterness during these past years and now he was overwhelmed with love and desired to make restitution with them by showing kindness to them.

We also need to take time to reflect on the reaction of the brothers to Joseph's generosity. It is interesting to note that guilt keeps us from receiving another's gift of love. Guilt obstructs love. Guilt keeps us separated from ourselves when we can't even forgive ourselves. It keeps us separated from others when we can't forgive ourselves for what we are guilty of doing to them. And, guilt keeps us separated from God. We were created with a conscience that keeps us mindful of our sinful condition. We are guilty of the wrong we have done against God. Our wrongdoing becomes most obvious when we admit how we have mistreated one another. This guilt that we carry around with us robs us of many things but most of all a life lived full and free, a life lived in a relationship of loving kindness with God.

God wants to give His love to all. We call this love grace. Grace is the love of God that we cannot earn or deserve any more than these ten brothers could earn or deserve the love of Joseph. Joseph wanted his brothers to begin to understand that he loved them. He forgave them. God also wants us to know that the guilt we carry around with us is covered over with the blood of Jesus. Jesus is the One who died for us in order that the sins we have committed against Him have been forgiven. Our guilt remains relentless and continues to get in the way. We believe the lie that tells us we are still guilty and we do not deserve God's love; however, God's invitation to us is to receive the free gift of His love that He offers in His Son Jesus. Write out what He tells us in Ephesians 2:8-9. _____

His love is pure, undeserved love. It is the free gift of God that we receive by believing that our sins are forgiven and our guilt has been eradicated through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son Jesus. His free gift of forgiveness is our freedom.

MEMORIZATION: In this same chapter, Ephesians 2:4, St. Paul writes these words: "But, _____, being rich in _____, because of the great _____ with which He loved us, even when we were _____ in our _____, made us _____ together with _____—by _____ you have been _____..."

This passage holds the Good News of God's love for us in Jesus. Write these words on an index card and, like the others, make this memory verse a part of your memory library. Each day be renewed in these words of love the Father wants to share with you as you live your life, not perfect but forgiven, and as one restored, set free and released to share His loving kindness with others.

Part 4

PERSONAL APPLICATION: As we consider guilt in our lives we need to look at it from two points of view.

1. First, like Joseph, is there someone who has done wrong or harm to me? _____
I have been reminded of God's great love for me and how He daily pours out His loving kindness on me. Now I need to reflect on how I am treating this person I have named.
 - a. What is a concrete way in which my life is reflecting to that person the love and kindness that God has generously given me? _____
 - b. What area(s) of my life do I want God to be with me and enable me to make changes that reflect His kindness to others? _____
-

2. We also need to consider guilt from the viewpoint of the brothers. Is there guilt you are carrying for some word or action that you said or did which you know in your heart has caused an offense against someone in particular? Who is that person? _____
- a. What was the offense? _____
- It is not easy for any of us to admit guilt. Like Reuben we quickly want to place the blame anywhere but on ourselves. Consider these brothers who held their guilt for all these many years. They couldn't believe they did what they did. We read the words in Genesis 42:21, "We saw the distress of his soul when he begged us and we did not listen..." In essence, they are crying out, "How could we ever have done that?"
- b. As we consider our guilt we must ask the question, "Why am I hanging on to my guilt?" This question needs to be answered. Am I hanging on because I have not been reconciled with the person I've offended? Am I hanging on because what I have done could never be forgiven? Am I hanging on because it is the way I deal with my wrong and I am more comfortable living with my guilt? Why am I hanging on? _____
- c. What action am I going to take against my guilt because I know that guilt is not God's desire for my life? He wants me living life full and free. _____
-

PRAYER: O Lord, I come before You with a heart that celebrates its freedom from guilt. I no longer need to carry the pain of the past but am able to live life full and free. By faith I believe that because of Jesus' death and resurrection I am forgiven. He died for me! I am set free to live for You! You have demonstrated Your loving kindness to me. Enable me to show loving kindness toward others. Thank You for not holding my sin against me. Thank You for loving me with the free gift of Your grace that is mine in Christ Jesus. _____

Part 5

ASSIGNMENT: Reread Genesis 42:29-38. Can you imagine the conversation, or lack of it, as these brothers continue their journey home each muddling over in their minds the question: "What is this that God has done to us?"

EXERCISE: Jacob's sons are home again. Imagine the commotion as they share their story with their father. How puzzled and bewildered they all must have felt.

1. In verses 30-34 we are given the account of the report they brought to their father. Does everything sound accurate? _____
2. In verse 35 something happens. Remember in verse 27 when one of the brothers opened his sack to feed his donkey on the journey home he found that his money had been returned. And what happens in verse 35? _____
What is their reaction when they find the money? _____
3. What are Jacob's words to his sons? _____

So, what's this about? What do you think Jacob is really saying to these ten sons? _____

In verse 37 Reuben speaks up. He has felt responsible for what was done to Joseph and the grief of his father. What does he say? _____

4. Jacob is adamant. What is his response? _____

Jacob reveals that he has turned his favor toward Benjamin, the other son of his wife Rachel. He also confirms what began as a suspicion in verse 1 that he no longer regards these ten sons as his sons. What words does he use in verse 38? _____
5. What potential dilemma does his favor for Benjamin pose for this family? _____

TEACHING: The famine continues to be severe in the land and Jacob orders his sons to go back to Egypt and purchase more grain. Judah explains to his father that what the governor had said, he meant. Judah knew that the trip was useless unless Jacob sent Benjamin along with them. Jacob then complains to them questioning why they had given so much information to the governor. They explained that they were interrogated thoroughly and admitted that they had no idea that the information would be used against them. Judah sets before his father the gauntlet: Send Benjamin. I will be responsible. If anything happens, I will be the one for you to blame the rest of my life.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 43. Reluctantly, Jacob concedes and Benjamin is sent to Egypt with his brothers.

EXERCISE:

1. Notice what all Jacob sends along with his sons is a gift to the man. What was included in verse 12? _____

Jacob wanted the brothers to be prepared to pay back the silver in the event there was a mistake.

2. What was Jacob's prayer for his sons as they departed (verse 14)? _____

3. The brothers hurry down to Egypt and present themselves with Benjamin to Joseph. What are Joseph's orders to his steward (verse 16)? _____

4. The men were taken to Joseph's house. Verse 18 tells us they were _____.
5. Consider the distortion their guilt brought to their thoughts. What did they conclude? _____

6. So, they plead their case before the steward who reassures them that everything is just fine. He received their silver. What does he say in verse 23? _____

TEACHING: The narrative continues as the brothers plead their case to the steward declaring their innocence regarding the silver found in their sacks and their desire to purchase additional food. Then comes the sentence: "We do not know who put our money in our sacks (verse 22)." The steward reassures them they have nothing to fear. In essence he says, "I don't have a clue who gave you the silver you found because I received your silver. My records show that you have paid in full! Your God, the God of your father must have given you the treasure you found in your sacks. You owe me nothing." The question that needs to be asked is "Then who paid our debt for the food we took home if the silver that was to pay for the food was found in our sacks?" Or, "If the food was paid for with the silver we brought, who gave us this additional silver that we found in our sacks?"

Reviewing Genesis 42:25 we remember that Joseph had given the order to return to each man his silver and give them provisions for their journey. Joseph took upon himself the responsibility of *paying their debt*. He paid the debt the brothers owed for their grain from his own account. They were debt free. They owed nothing.

WHAT WE LEARN ABOUT GOD: Throughout these lessons on Joseph we have learned that God was with him and showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of others. In this particular situation in his life and the life of his brothers we learn about the relationship God has with us. Although we have broken our relationship with Him by choosing to go our own way and do our own thing, yet He has chosen out of His great love for us to pay our debt for sin. The debt was eternal death and His gift of love was eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus. In a similar way, Joseph portrays for us God and His great love. Joseph paid the debt for his brothers. They owed him everything; he made them

pay nothing. He took care of everything. He paid it all! He forgave their debt and they were free to live debt free!

Have you experienced living debt free? Have you experienced life free from guilt? Free from shame? Free from blame? Our Heavenly Father offers to us the gift of debt-free living by receiving in faith the gift of His forgiveness.

EXERCISE (continues):

1. Then Simeon is brought to them (verse 24). Preparations were made for the governor to eat with them. Gifts were prepared to present. Animals were tended to and feet were washed in preparation for the meal. When Joseph came home he received them as they bowed to the ground before him. What does he ask them (verse 27)? _____

They reported to him and then bowed low again (verse 28).

2. Then he asks about Benjamin. Many years have passed. Undoubtedly, his younger brother's looks had certainly changed and apparently Joseph wanted to verify that this was Benjamin. What were Joseph's words to him? _____
Do you sense that the harshness had gone from Joseph's voice as he spoke to the brothers?
3. Verse 30 reveals the heart of Joseph for his brothers, especially for Benjamin, the son of his own mother. Overcome with emotion he hurried out of the room and looked for a place to weep. He ends up in his own private room where he cries. What must Joseph have released through his tears that had been pent up all of these years and now was laid bare at the sight of his brother? How close had Joseph and Benjamin become as young boys? The drop in the cistern affected the relationships between the members of this family, especially between these two brothers.

PRAYER: Obviously, the story is not over. Lesson 5 will continue with the events that happen next in the lives of Joseph and his brothers. As God was with them, uniting them once again, He is with us drawing us ever closer to those in our lives whom we love. Share with the Lord your desire for His love to be shared with all as you experience His pleasure in granting to everyone restoration and life with Him forever. _____

LESSON FIVE

I AM JOSEPH!

GENESIS 43-45 – THE BROTHER

OVERVIEW OF LESSON 5

Overview	47
Introduction	48
Lesson 5: Genesis 43-45	
• Joseph Eats with His Brothers	49
• The Favored One	50
• The Brothers Are Caught	51
• Before Joseph Again	52
• Joseph's Identity Revealed	55

INTRODUCTION

The time has come for Joseph to reveal his identity but one more piece of information needs to be determined. Why did Joseph insist that these brothers bring their youngest brother to him? Why was this young brother favored by Joseph with gifts and food? Why wasn't young Benjamin treated like all the other brothers—or, why didn't Joseph treat all the other brothers like he treated Benjamin? Discover in Lesson 5 what Joseph needed to know before he revealed himself to them.

Joseph gives these brothers a difficult time. Was he trying to pay them back for the wicked and evil things they had done to him? What does Joseph teach us about forgiveness? Does forgiveness demand a payback before releasing us? What does forgiveness demand, if anything?

Joseph believed something that his brothers did not know. Discover what Joseph knew and believed about the God of his forefathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Explore the meaning of that for your own life.

Part 1

INTRODUCTION: Jacob finally consented to have Benjamin accompany the nine brothers to Egypt. Loaded down with gifts for the governor they made their way to purchase more grain. A degree of apprehension accompanied this small group of travelers. Their last experience in Egypt didn't go as well as they had hoped. The governor spoke harshly with them, put them in confinement for three days, demanded that a brother be left behind as a guarantee that they would return with their youngest brother, and when they opened their sacks of grain they discovered that all the silver for their purchases had been returned.

On this trip the brothers discover that they have been ordered to the governor's house. There they are to eat their noon meal. However, the imaginations of their minds cause them to believe that they would be made into slaves as a punishment from God for the wrong they had committed against their brother Joseph several years earlier. The steward in charge reassures them that there is nothing to fear. "Peace be with you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has put treasure in your sacks." At last, the ten brothers are reunited with their brother Simeon who had been left behind in Egypt.

With their feet washed and their animals fed and cared for, Joseph enters the house where they are to eat. They presented gifts to him. Then he begins to question them about their father and confirms that they have brought their youngest brother Benjamin. Joseph is overcome with emotion when he sees his younger brother. He quickly leaves and goes off to a place to cry. Our story resumes as he reenters the room where they are to eat.

ASSIGNMENT: Read through to the end of chapter 43.

EXERCISE: After Joseph had refreshed himself he came and announced that the food was to be served.

1. Notice where everyone sat in verse 32:
 - a. Where did Joseph eat? _____
 - b. Where did the brothers eat? _____
 - c. Where did the Egyptians eat? _____
2. Why this seating arrangement? _____
3. Why wasn't Joseph sitting with the Egyptians? What is the clue in Genesis 41:12? _____

4. What else are we told about the seating assignments in verse 33? _____

5. What was the reaction of the brothers? _____
6. What was interesting about the food as it was served? _____
7. What portion was given to Benjamin? _____
8. According to verse 34 it sounds as though a good time was had by all: "...And they _____
and were _____ with him."

Part 2

REFLECTIONS: We cannot overlook some points to consider in these few verses of the story. Have you considered...

1. Why hasn't Joseph told them who he is? He is noticeably moved at the sight of his brother Benjamin. All twelve brothers are together in the same room. It is apparent that he has forgiven them. Why is he withholding his identity from them?
2. Then, there's this matter of the seating arrangement. First, there are three different serving areas: Joseph's, the brothers', and the Egyptians'. We are told that it was detestable to the Egyptians to eat with the Hebrews. It doesn't appear that this was a head table arrangement. Was Joseph eating alone?
3. And, how did the Egyptians manage to seat them in the proper birth order from oldest to youngest. How did they know? The brothers were astonished.
4. Did the brothers observe that their food was the same as the governors? The food was taken from his table, not the table of the Egyptians. Did they notice? Were they all eating the same food? Did they care? Did it matter to them?
5. Joseph blatantly lavished his younger brother with more than the others and yet it says that they feasted and drank freely with him. Five times as much is obviously a larger portion yet no one seemed to be bothered enough to make comment.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 44.

EXERCISE: The story continues with one more incident.

1. Verses 1-2: What does Joseph instruct his steward to do? _____

2. In the morning the brothers begin their journey back to Canaan. What is Joseph's next instruction to his steward? _____

-
3. The steward catches up with the men and repeats what Joseph has told them. What is their response to these accusations? _____

Why? Why? Why? What have we done now? Do you hear their frustration? Haven't we endured enough? Underline the word *why* in verses 7 and 8.

4. What is their pledge in verse 9? _____

The steward agrees that whoever is in possession of the silver cup will become his slave.

5. Verses 10-13: So, one by one they search through the sacks and, of course, where was the cup found? _____

Part 3

TEACHING: When the silver cup was discovered in Benjamin's sack it says in Genesis 44:13 that they tore their clothes. Tearing their clothes was an act of deep regret or remorse, of severe grief or mourning. Consider the cross-reference following the word clothes in verse 13. Who was the individual and what was the circumstance in Genesis 37:29? _____

Another time in the Genesis account of Joseph these same words were said, "He tore his clothes." Who was the individual and what was the circumstance in Genesis 37:34? _____

EXERCISE: The brothers are distraught. They cannot leave Benjamin behind so once again they all head back to Egypt to plead with the governor. Genesis 44:14 sounds as though Joseph may have been waiting for them at his house.

1. A leader has emerged from among the brothers, a spokesman, if you will. Who is he (verse 16)? _____ And why would he be the one to take the lead? What was at stake for him? See Genesis 43:8-10. _____

2. Immediately upon coming into Joseph's presence they threw themselves to the ground. By bowing before him they acknowledged who was the greatest among them. With positions established, Joseph begins his accusations against them. He challenged them. Didn't they know that he had means discovering what they had done? How dare they think they could get away

with such behavior against the governor of Egypt! Why would he be attacking his brothers so unjustly? _____

Had they done anything wrong? _____

3. Once again, their burden of guilt condemned them. The past had caught up with them. It wasn't about the present. The present, however, had become distorted by the past. What is the bottom line according to verse 16? _____

4. Judah said that all of them were guilty and all of them would remain in Egypt as his slaves. Joseph says that he wouldn't do such a thing. Only the guilty one should remain and, of course, that someone was _____. Once again, Judah speaks on behalf of the group. What are the things Judah reviews with the governor?

a. Verses 20-21: _____

b. Verses 21-24: _____

c. Verses 25-26: _____

d. Verses 26-29: _____

Judah has summarized everything. He has articulated the truth of what has transpired since their first trip to buy grain in Egypt.

5. As he continues Judah shares what will happen if Benjamin is not returned to his father. In addition, in verse 32 what else does he reveal? Whose life is on the line? What is the future of that life if Benjamin doesn't come home? _____

6. For what does Judah plead in verse 33-34? _____

Part 4

REFLECTION: Joseph still has not revealed to his brothers his true identity. Instead, he wanted to know if things had changed since they were together tending the sheep. At that time animosity toward the favored son of Jacob, namely Joseph, had driven these men to want to kill him but instead they settled for selling him to merchants on their way to Egypt. They deceived their father by dosing Joseph's robe in goat's blood and bringing it to him and asked if he recognized this to be Joseph's robe. Then they left Jacob to draw his own conclusion about what had happened.

EXERCISE: Had things changed? What could Joseph observe? With each question, mark the reference to support your answer.

1. How did they treat each other? _____

2. What news did they bring about family back home? _____

3. How did they speak about Benjamin? _____
 4. Had their father made Benjamin his favored son? _____
 5. How did the brothers regard their father? _____
 6. What was their own heart condition? _____
 7. How had they come to regard their own actions against Joseph? _____
-

REFLECTION: As you review the story and answer these questions, what do you think? Have things changed? What in particular would you consider to be the biggest change? _____

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Yes, things had changed for these brothers. Time and maturity can bring us to a whole new place in life.

1. Are there changes you have observed in your own life that reveal good things about your character, your personality, your values, and your relationships? Be bold to identify them. After all, if changes aren't happening, how would you feel about that? What are some of these positive changes? _____
 2. What are some positive changes that you have observed in a friend, a colleague or a child over the span of several years? As God is at work in us so He is also at work in the lives of others. Take time to acknowledge some of these positive changes. _____
 3. Consider some things you may be able to say to this person that would affirm and encourage him/her. _____
-

MEMORIZATION: Affirmations and words of encouragement empower us to reflect to the world that God is at work in us accomplishing His purposes in and through us. St. Paul wants to remind us that it is God who does mighty things in us and it is God who empowers us for daily living. Take time to memorize Philippians 1:6. Again, use your index cards. Write the passage and consider through the week the many ways in which you can recognize God at work in you.

EXERCISE: It's interesting to note that even though things had changed and these brothers were no longer hateful and seeking revenge but rather remorseful. Regretting their past actions, they still carried

the guilt. Guilt is not put to rest until wrong has been forgiven. Look in Genesis 42-44 and note the references listed. Write the words that reveal their guilt.

REFERENCE

WORDS THAT REVEAL THEIR GUILT

1. Genesis 42:21, 22

1. _____

2. Genesis 42:28

2. _____

3. Genesis 44:16

3 _____

What they really wanted to hear they needed to hear from the one whom they had offended? But, could that ever be possible? Who knew where Joseph was by now? For all these brothers knew, he was dead.

PRAYER: Guilt is a heavy burden to bear, Lord. We sin against ourselves by doing what we didn't even think we had the potential of doing. We sin against others by carelessly speaking about them and causing offense because we are jealous of who they are and envious of what they have. We sin against You, Lord, by the way we treat ourselves and others for we have all been created by You and are all loved by You. Forgive me for the times I have offended You with my thoughts, words, and actions. Especially today I ask You to forgive me for the sins I have committed against myself: _____

Forgive me for the offenses I have caused against my friends, family members, neighbors, and others:

Forgive me for the pain I have caused You, for the times I have wanted to do my own thing, and for the times when I haven't wanted to do anything at all. Forgive me for: _____

Thank You for reminding me that You are at work in me. I am Your work in progress. You will not abandon me. You will complete Your work in me. _____

Part 5

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 45:1-15.

EXERCISE: Joseph can hold it back no longer. Judah pleads for Benjamin on behalf of his father. Joseph is confident that life within the family back in Canaan has changed.

1. One gets the impression that Joseph is about to lose it. What are his orders in verse 1?

2. Now Joseph is alone with his brothers. What must his brothers have thought when the governor of the land of Egypt is all alone with them – He has lost control of himself and is crying so loudly that the Egyptians hear him and Pharaoh’s house hears about it. What would you have thought if you were one of the brothers in that room? Or, if you had been the steward? Or, even Pharaoh himself? _____

Joseph hasn’t revealed himself to them. They haven’t been told anything. The truth is that he’s crying so much that he can’t even tell them.

3. Very simply in verse 3 what does Joseph say? _____
4. And, what is his immediate question? _____
5. What is the reaction of the brothers? _____
6. Joseph tells them again who he is. Then he goes on to reassure them. What does he say in verse 5? _____

Joseph knew that God was with Him. Even now in this time of revelation he tells them...

He tells them that there will be five more years of famine but believes that God brought him there for what purpose? _____

He sees his life as directed by God who acted to preserve a remnant and save their lives by means of a great deliverance.

7. Joseph believed that God took the wrongdoing and circumstances of his life to bring the great deliverance. Although they mistreated him and sent him on his way with the caravan, Joseph believed that God took the circumstances and turned them to a greater good. In verse 8 look at what he says God made him during these years in Egypt:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

REFLECTION: What a dramatic scene! The brothers are reunited. The most powerful man in Egypt besides Pharaoh, the man who could order their death or their release, is their brother. He’s not just any

brother but he has been made the governor of the land. Joseph takes no credit for his position. His only claim is that God has been at work. It is God who has done this. It is God who turned an ugly situation between brothers into a means of bringing about a great deliverance. This deliverance didn't just affect the people of Egypt but the people from countries around Egypt.

So, you are the newspaper reporter found again in Egypt. You have heard from the Egyptians who heard the outburst of weeping in the room where the governor was left alone with these eleven men. You are to report the story. Who would be the first one you would choose to interview? Why? What would you want to ask him? _____

Is this a human interest story of how God saved the lives of people by providing a man called Joseph to dream a dream and devise a plan for storing food that would be needed over the next several years? Or, does this story have a deeper significance? Why would the editor-in-chief send you to Egypt to report this particular story? What information have you gleaned from those you interviewed that would give real significance to this real life family situation that eventually affected a nation and the world? _____

MEMORIZATION: Three times Joseph's comment is "God sent me..." All through the Bible there are stories that speak of God sending people. This story ends with a verse that cannot be overlooked. It's found in Genesis 50:20. As long as Jacob was alive the brothers did not fear what Joseph would do to them. When their father died it raise new fear in them. Joseph's comment to them is one to memorize. Write out Genesis 50:20. _____

Keep this verse as part of your collection of memorized verses. It reminds us that although we do not have pure thoughts, desires, and actions God takes what we do and works it all for our good and the good of others. For those of you who want another passage that gives this same message turn to Romans 8:28-29. Guilt can consume us yet God wants to shake us and remind us that regardless of what we have done, in Jesus, He turns it for the good of those who love Him.

PRAYER: Take time to praise and thank Him for His indescribable love. He intends that our lives manifest His presence and glory. _____

LESSON SIX

BRING MY FATHER DOWN HERE

GENESIS 45, 46, 50 – THE SON

OVERVIEW OF LESSON 6

Overview	57
Introduction	58
Lesson 6: Genesis 45, 46, 50	
• The Brothers Return Home to Jacob	59
• A Day of Celebration	61
• Jacob's Caravan Leaves Canaan	62
• Promise Kept	64
• Father and Son Reunited	65
• Forgiveness Eradicates Fear	67

INTRODUCTION

The story of Joseph continues with his insistence that his father Jacob be brought to Egypt. At last father and son are reunited! Everything is as it should be. The family is together after leaving the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He leaves the land where his parents and grandparents are buried. He makes the journey to Egypt where his son is now the governor, the second in the land.

Jacob was well advanced in years. Before he died he pronounced a blessing on each of his sons and told them his one last request. He wanted to be buried in the cave that Abraham had bought as a burying place in the land of Canaan. He knew that Egypt was not the Promised Land that God had promised and wanted to return there to be buried.

But after Jacob died and was buried in Canaan as he had requested, a relational problem remains that caused fear to rise up in the hearts of these brothers. One would think that everything is good and that relationships have been restored; however, the brothers feared that since their father was dead that now Joseph would pay them back for all the evil they had done to him. Quietly enter into this moment with these brothers as forgiveness is declared, the most powerful force that eradicates fear once and for all.

Part 1

INTRODUCTION: At last Joseph and his brothers are reunited. So, what happens next? Joseph instructs his brother to report back to their father all that they have seen and heard. He wants his father to know of the high position he has in Egypt. He wants his brothers to bring Jacob to Egypt where they will all live in the land of Goshen because the famine would last five more years.

The brothers shared time together and, undoubtedly, caught up on all that had gone on during the past years. Joseph believed that God had sent him ahead of the others to preserve them. He believed it was God who sent him and then made him ruler over of all the land. He forgave them. He bestowed kindness on the entire family. He offered them land where they could live, land that was good for grazing their sheep and cattle. He didn't want them to delay any longer but to come under his protection in the land immediately so they would no longer be affected by the famine. Before they left they hugged, kissed, embraced, and wept together.

Even Pharaoh became involved and insisted that the family live together in Egypt and enjoy living off the fat of the land. He confirmed what Joseph had already promised. In addition, he wanted them to take carts and whatever else they would need to facilitate the family's move. His promise was that the best of Egypt would be theirs.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 45:16-28.

EXERCISE:

1. The brothers set out for home. They are loaded down once again. What did Joseph give them (verses 21, 22)? _____
2. Once again, Benjamin is favored (Genesis 43:34, Genesis 44:2). What does Joseph give to him in verse 22? _____
3. What does he send to his father (verse 23)? _____

4. Joseph sends his brothers away, loaded down with the best of Egypt. What is his final send off to his brothers in verse 24? _____
Why would he say that? _____

TEACHING: Joseph’s final comment to his brothers sounds as though he’s just trying to throw a last punch at them as if to say, “Bye, guys. Be good and don’t fight.” Of course, this is far from truth. However, we do know that human nature wants to place blame. It’s as though we aren’t satisfied that things have been settled until we can know that we ourselves are free from guilt. Remember the conversation when they were returning from their first trip to Egypt. Recall what Reuben said to them as they were trying to figure out why this distress had come upon them (Genesis 42:21-22). “I told you so.” “It wasn’t me. It wasn’t my fault we’re in this mess.” Blame is like a ball bouncing in the air going from one person to another. Just keep it away from me. It’s someone else’s fault. Blame him. Blame her.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Had the brothers forgiven one another? Your thoughts: _____

2. Had they forgiven themselves? Your thoughts: _____

Part 2

PERSONAL REFLECTION: How are you when it comes to blame? Each of us needs to consider our own reaction when it comes to confessing our own wrongdoing and own up.

1. I really don’t want to admit how guilty I am.
2. I really don’t want to have to bear the consequences for what I have done.
3. I would go free and let you take the blame.
4. I don’t mind watching you squirm. After all, you are guilty.
5. Whatever it takes to save face...
6. Come to think of it, I’m not so bad when I consider what all you have done.
7. In fact, I don’t even know that I’m guilty of doing anything wrong.
8. Fill in your own reactions to confessing and admitting guilt. What’s your way of handling guilt and blame? _____

If I don’t admit my guilt and accept the blame for what I have done, nothing in my life will be different. If I confess my wrongdoing God is eager to forgive me and to cleanse me from all of my sin, from all that is not right with my life. Remember the memory verse from 1 John 1:8-10. Write out the words once again: _____

PRAYER: Lord, I must admit that I have a hard time admitting my own guilt and accepting blame for the things I have done wrong in my life. I'm a lot like Reuben. I want to go around with an I-told-you-so attitude rather than admit that it's really my fault that I'm in the trouble I'm in. I don't want to take responsibility for my own actions and bear the consequences of my wrongdoing. On top of all that, I don't want to admit that I even need to be forgiven. Admitting that condemns me on the spot. But, I have done wrong. I am guilty. I do need to confess my sinful acts. I need to hear You tell me that I have been forgiven. Knowing that You have forgiven me is the only way that I can be free of this burden of guilt and live unencumbered. In Your Son Jesus I am released. Thank You for loving me and setting me free.

REFLECTION: All eleven brothers are on their way back to their father in Canaan. Just imagine the atmosphere of the group. Undoubtedly, each has his own thoughts and reflections. Conversation might have even suggested, "How blind could we have been?" "Of course, it was Joseph. We should have recognized him". "He was dressed as an Egyptian ruler. It was a perfect disguise." "Then we carried on in front of him and he knew everything we were saying. He sure didn't let on." "I am so relieved. Man, is Dad ever going to be thrilled! I bet he won't even believe us..."

Can you imagine how eager they must have been to be home with their father again? His son is not dead but alive. His son is not a slave but the ruler in the land that holds enough life in its storehouses for the world. His son is eagerly waiting to be reunited with him. What joy in Jacob's family! Doesn't it almost sound too good to be true?

EXERCISE: The joy of the father is hard to describe.

1. How does Jacob respond to what his sons report (verses 25-28)?
 - a. What do they tell him (verse 25)? _____
 - b. What is Jacob's reaction? _____
 - c. What turned his unbelief into belief? What revived his spirit? _____

 - d. What does he say in verse 28? _____

Part 3

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 46:1-7; 46:26-27.

EXERCISE: What a day of rejoicing!

1. Jacob (Israel) sets out from Hebron in Canaan with all that he has anticipating the reunion with his son who he now knows is alive. He passed through Beersheba on his way. There he sacrificed to the God of his father Isaac. What could cause a problem for Jacob that would make him uncertain about leaving Canaan? _____

What do you remember about God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

2. Verses 2-4: God came to Israel in a _____
 - a. He called out to him: _____
 - b. What was his response? _____
 - c. How did God introduce Himself? _____

 - d. God told Jacob not to be afraid to go down to Egypt and then made four promises:
 - i. _____
 - ii. _____
 - iii. _____
 - iv. _____

REFLECTION: So much had happened in such a short period of time. Undoubtedly, once the story had been shared and Jacob was convinced that Joseph was alive, everyone scurried to get things packed up so they could begin their journey. Amidst all the rushing around, God wanted to reassure Jacob that He was with him. He would fulfill all that He had promised to his father and grandfather. God would be with him and would make him into a great nation. His descendants would be brought to land of Canaan and, yes, he would see Joseph before he closed his eyes in death.

1. In the morning when Jacob awakens and the family hustles around preparing to resume their journey, what do you think is going on inside of Jacob? Once again, the God of his father has come to him. There were other times...
 - a. What were the circumstances in Genesis 28:10 and following verses? _____

 - b. Remember the night before he was to meet up with Esau. What happened that night (Genesis 32:22 and following verses)? _____

5. Leaving the land of Canaan was no small thing for Jacob. He was leaving behind the place where his wife Rachel, Isaac and Rebekah were buried. He was leaving behind a place he would never

see again. Leaving a place and moving on to another holds adventure and excitement but at the same time anxiety and uncertainty. What one thing in verse 4 did God want Jacob to remember?

3. What difference for Jacob to know that God was with him! How do you know that God's presence is with you wherever you go? Do you know? _____
-

Part 4

MEMORIZATION: There was great comfort and reassurance for Jacob knowing that God was with him. There is also great comfort for you and me to know and believe that God is with us also, just as He was with Jacob. In Psalm 139:7-10 the Psalmist asks the question, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence?" No matter where we go God is there with us. His Word says this. This is truth. Again, write the verse on an index card and on the back of the card note all the places you might choose to go and keep reminding yourself that there is no place you can go that God is not present with you.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

1. What comforting thoughts come to you knowing that God is with you wherever you go? _____

2. Are there places where you go that might make you feel uncomfortable because God is there with you? _____
3. Some places you go God's presence may seem so obvious. These places might include a mountain top or hospital room. Where are some places you go that you just know God is there?

PRAYER: Write your own prayer. You may choose to share with the Lord those places where He finds you and where you need to acknowledge He is there with you. Confess those places that you find uncomfortable knowing that He is with you. Celebrate that no matter what you do or where you go that He is with you. His faithful presence does not depend on your behavior but on His amazing love for you.

TEACHING: The Bible makes a big point to let the readers know what this nomadic caravan looked like as it began its exodus out of Canaan. Several points need to be considered.

1. Up to this point Abraham's descendants have been few. The Bible has only referenced Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac, and then Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Esau. We know that Jacob's family has a minimum of these eleven sons plus Joseph who is already in Egypt. Watch the promise of progeny beginning to be fulfilled with Jacob's family as we continue on with the story.
2. God's plan for His people is not always a straight line. Abraham comes to Canaan and is promised the land. He was also promised that he would become a great nation. Then we learned that Sarah was barren. Now, we know that Canaan is to belong to Jacob's family. We see them leaving because of the famine in the land. Consider your own life. Have you found that not everything in life is black and white? Not everything happens just as we plan. We have goals, plans, and aspirations and sometimes the way to reaching those things has many turns we need to take in order to eventually get to where we're headed. When do you find yourself reluctant to turn onto a different path than the one you have set for yourself? _____

3. The caravan has grown. Approximately 70 people are traveling together. This is no small endeavor. Pharaoh's carts were certainly appreciated for accommodating all of their possessions. This reminds us that God's promise of great possessions is also being fulfilled.
4. And, we see the example of family as together they move. All of Jacob's sons, grandsons, daughters and granddaughters. Everyone stayed together. This picture of Jacob's family forces us to consider our own families. Size isn't the issue but standing strong together is. No one stayed behind. Everyone was committed to this new life in Egypt. Everyone was aligned with the vision of a new life together in Egypt. Unity made the family strong. Verses 8-27 give an account of all who travelled with Jacob out of Canaan to Egypt.

REFLECTION: As we observe this caravan in our mind's eye we can see that God is keeping His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and now Jacob. Can you envision walking alongside those in your family group, maybe holding a little one, offering encouragement to another who may be hot and tired, and chatting with a brother while attempting to imagine this new life in this new land? If you were a reporter with a television camera, who would you spend most of your time reporting on and why? _____

Part 5

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 46:28-30.

EXERCISE: The caravan is approaching Egypt.

1. Jacob sends Judah on a mission. What is he to do (verse 28)? _____
2. They have arrived in the region of Goshen. Take time to locate Goshen on one of the first maps in the back of your Bible. Note the distance they have traveled. Remember it was at Beersheba where God came to Jacob in a vision. From Beersheba to Goshen appears to be approximately _____ miles.
3. Joseph had his chariot ready and when he heard that his father was nearby he went to _____ to meet him.
4. What a blessed reunion! Note in verse 29 the emotion expressed by father and son: _____

5. Being with Joseph was all that Jacob wanted. His heart was satisfied. He no longer had the uncertainty about what had actually happened to his son. God graciously brought healing to the whole family. Jacob and Joseph were in each other's arms once again.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: Separation was not the only thing with which Jacob had to deal. It was more than that. It was the uncertainty of knowing whether his son was dead or alive. We can listen to the news almost every night and hear stories in which children have been abducted from parents or have fled for whatever reasons from their homes and parents. We can also consider the soldier sent overseas and separated for an indefinite period of time from family and friends. Has something similar to this happened in your life? Separation wasn't the issue as much as not knowing where the other person was and whether or not he or she was safe, even alive.

1. If this individual was you, would you be able to articulate some of the feelings that you endured?

2. Did your situation end well? If so, what were the emotions that were shared? Were there any?

3. But maybe that wasn't your situation. Do you know of someone who is longing to know the fate of a loved one? What comfort is there for such grief and pain? _____

4. How might you find a way to connect with those who love you and want to embrace you like Jacob embraced his son and wept? _____
5. If guilt and blame for wrongdoing are keeping you apart, what might be done to change those realities? _____
6. What is your part? _____

God wants to surround us with His divine arms. He wants to bring us back into a loving relationship with Him. He is our Father, our Creator. He is constantly watching for us as His children to come home. We

can only admit to Him that we have chosen to go our own way and do our own thing. We can only confess that we are less than what He intended us to be as reflectors of Him to the world in which we live. But, regardless of the circumstances or the situations in which we find ourselves He waits with arms outstretched to embrace us. Have you ever considered the thought that God might cry because He is so glad that you've come home?

PRAYER: O Father, You have created me. You have had great expectations for my life. You created me to reflect You to creation. One of the ways You have given me the freedom to express your forgiveness in my life is through the choices that I make. Enable me to find joy and peace in finding absolute freedom in You. Thank You for looking on me with Your love and forgiveness. Embrace me and hold me ever close to You as we are united together through Your Son Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior.

DIGGING DEEPER: The Bible continues to give more on the life of this family in the remaining chapters of Genesis. The story is interesting and includes more information and insights. Should you choose, this list of references will guide you in your ongoing study:

- Genesis 46:31ff – Settling in the land of Goshen
- Genesis 47:9 – Jacob's age when he is brought before Pharaoh
- Genesis 47:13 – The effects of the famine and how Joseph reduced the Egyptians to servitude
- Genesis 47:26 – Joseph's law: A fifth of the produce belonged to Pharaoh
- Genesis 47:27ff – Jacob's death is near
- Genesis 48 – Joseph's sons blessed by Jacob
- Genesis 49 – Each of Jacob's sons receive an appropriate blessing before Jacob dies
- Genesis 49:29 – Jacob dies
- Genesis 50:1-14 – Joseph and his brothers bury their father in Canaan
- Genesis 50:22ff – The death of Joseph

Part 6

INTRODUCTION: We cannot leave the story of Joseph without including Genesis 50:15-21. These verses hold good news for these brothers and for us. Now that their father was dead these brothers were fearful that Joseph would turn on them. They had seen him as the powerful leader he was in the land. Everyone was subject to him. He only had to say the word and they could all be imprisoned or even

killed. These brothers believed that their lives had been spared because of their father Jacob. They believed that Jacob provided the protection they needed to remain safe and secure. Jacob is dead.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 50:15-21.

EXERCISE:

1. What do these verses reveal about these brothers? _____
2. What did they fear in verse 15? _____
3. Again, deceit rears its ugly head. What do they tell Joseph that their father said? _____

4. What do these verses reveal about Joseph? _____

5. They came asking for forgiveness again. This grieved Joseph. Didn't they know his love? Didn't they know that his love for them was greater than guilt? What did he tell them? _____

Forgiveness eradicates fear. He tells them not to be afraid. He promises to take care of them and their children. Finally, the text reads that he reassured them of his love for them and spoke kindly to them. The act of forgiveness was complete.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Are you continuing to choose to hold on to guilt in your life? His brother's guilt grieved Joseph. He wept for them. What could he do or say that would convince them that he loved them and had forgiven them. He wanted them to get on with their lives and not be slaves to that which no longer existed.

What guilt in your life will just not go away? What is something for which you cannot forgive yourself? Forgiving ourselves is a choice and God offers us His help. He enables us both to forgive and to accept forgiveness, not only from Him, but also from others. The forgiveness He offers is free. By our own power we cannot even accept it; but by His power forgiveness can become ours, personally, without reservation. The Bible teaches us to confess our sins to one another (James 5:16). Confession is a part of receiving forgiveness. Confession allows the guilt to be opened up and emptied out, thus bringing forgiveness in. Confession promotes healing. Confessing our sins to one another also brings healing to the brokenness in our lives. Confession does not mean that one is greater than the other. Confession to another helps us to recognize that we have all sinned. Confession allows the words of love to penetrate our lives.

PRAYER: O Lord, You offer us the Good News of forgiveness for all of our sins. There is no need to carry around this toxic guilt that doesn't want to go away. Lord, thank You for empowering me to receive Your loving forgiveness. Thank You for the freedom that forgiveness has brought to my life. Because of Jesus I have the privilege of living my life as Your child, a child of the King! Thank You! Yes, I believe Your Word that says there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7). Open my eyes to see the opportunities I have to forgive others as I have been forgiven by You. Release others to live free and forgiven. _____

UNIT REVIEW

**GOD'S
FORGIVENESS,
OUR FREEDOM**

REVIEW

The purpose of this particular exercise is to affirm your growth and knowledge of Old Testament Bible stories. The primary characters in this unit have been Jacob and his sons. Most of the others in these chapters are referred to by their positions. Review some of the characters and individuals who hold various positions and note something you remember.

Reference	Character	Things I remember...
Genesis 37:21-23; 42:22		
Genesis 37:26; 43:8-9		
Genesis 39:1		
Genesis 39:7		
Genesis 39:21		
Genesis 40:2		
Genesis 40:2		
Genesis 42:24		

Genesis 43:29		
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Take time to note Joseph's journey to becoming the second-in-command in all the land of Egypt.

1. Genesis 37

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

2. Genesis 39

- a. _____
- b. _____

3. Genesis 40

- a. _____
- b. _____

4. Genesis 41

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

5. Genesis 42-44

- a. _____
- b. _____

6. Genesis 45

- a. _____
- b. _____

Review the markings that you made in your Bible throughout this study. Find the verse(s) you think has (have) personal significance for you as it (they) addresses(s) your life situation in this the 21st Century.

Write the verse(s). _____

Where can you identify with Joseph and his life? _____

If you had the opportunity for a one-on-one conversation with Joseph and wanted to ask him something that would help you through difficult times in your life, what would you ask? _____

“The Lord was with him.” Take a moment to identify those things in your life that remind you that the Lord is with you and then thank Him for the success He has given to you by granting you favor in the eyes of others. _____

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