

## Lesson 5: Life of Joseph, God's Man--Power (Genesis 41, 42 (47))

### *Introduction:*

Last week we followed Joseph as he was removed from prison and taken into the Pharaoh's palace and interpret the ruler's dreams. His interpretation was not good news. There would be seven years of severe famine in Egypt. This is serious.

Never before in the Egyptian Empire was there record of this kind of problem. Egypt is primarily a desert and only receives an average of one inch of rain a year so the threat of drought is and always was there.

But, Egyptian engineers had developed a system of ditches and reservoirs and gates to take advantage of a yearly flooding of the Nile River that covered the entire Nile basin.

I experienced this kind of thing when I visited my dad who was pastor of a church in the Mississippi River basin. Every few years the mighty Mississippi would flood the entire area covering all the farms and flooding all the houses. Every time it happened people like me said why don't they move but they just cleaned out the mud and moved back into their homes.

Why did they put up with this mess? With the water came rich top-soil that made their land super productive and brought many of them tremendous wealth. They weren't about to leave their profitable land.

Each year the Nile would overflow bringing water and fertile soil into Egypt causing a perfect environment for a wonderful bounty. So, rain or not there was seldom famine in Egypt. In fact, it was the "bread basket" of the world even into the time of the Roman Empire.

But Joseph said his God predicts seven years of famine and the Pharaoh believed him. His reputation in service of Potiphar and the Chief Jailer has obviously preceded him and God moved the ruler to act.

Now, if there were a man who could accurately predict what was going to happen in America for the next fourteen years, wouldn't you want him to be our Secretary of State? . . . So did the Pharaoh.

Genesis 41:41 explains, *"And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See I have set you over all the land of Egypt."*

### **I. JOSEPH ACKNOWLEDGED**

#### **A. He gave Joseph his signet ring (v 42).**

1. He could issue decrees.
2. That ring was the official seal of power.

Stamping a document with that ring was the same as affixing the king's signature. Remember in the Book of Esther King Xerxes gave his signet ring to Haman and Haman used it to produce an edict to wipe out all of the Jews in Media/Persia.

#### **B. He gave Joseph a gold necklace (v 42).**

1. He was Prime Minister.
2. That chain was an official sign of office.

If you notice in Europe, even today, they have chains of office worn at official state functions. Remember in Daniel King Belshazzar gave a chain to Daniel signifying that he was third ruler in the Kingdom of Babylon.

### **C. He gave Joseph chariot license number 2 (v 43).**

1. He was to be honored.

He was to ride in the second chariot beside the king.

2. The rider in the second chariot got the same treatment as that in the first, even the attendants running ahead shouting "Bow the knee!"

### **D. He gave Joseph complete authority (v 44).**

1. He was to be obeyed.

2. *Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, " {Though} I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."*

### **E. He gave Joseph a new name and a new wife (v 45).**

1. Joseph was loved.

Joseph was only thirty years old when he ruled over all of Egypt for the Pharaoh.

2. His new name was *Zaphenath-paneah*.

That name meant "God Speaks" or "God Reveals." So, as always, Joseph gave God the glory.

## **II. JOSEPH ACTS**

### **A. He collected abundant grain (vv 47-48).**

1. He organized the collection.

Each city had warehouses filled from the produce from surrounding farms.

2. How successful was he?

He stopped counting. Genesis 41:49 *"Thus Joseph stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea, **until he stopped measuring {it,} for it was beyond measure.**"*

### **B. He raised a family (vv 49-52)**

1. How good were these years?

*Now before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph . . . And Joseph named the first-born Manasseh, "For," {he said,} "God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." (v 49-50)*

1. In fact, they were very good.

*And he named the second Ephraim, "For," {he said,} "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."*

Notice: At every step, with Potiphar, with the Pharaoh, and now even in the naming of his children, he always gave glory to God.

### C. He was ready for the famine (vv 53-56)

1. The famine affected the entire known world.

*"and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said, then there was **famine in all the lands**; . . ." (v 54)*

2. Egypt was prepared and Pharaoh knew it.

*"but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do." (vv 54-55)*

### D. He was a wise steward for the Pharaoh (41:57 and 47:13-26)

1. Everybody in the known world came to Egypt.

All of them had to come to Joseph to buy grain (v 57).

2. Joseph made the Pharaoh mega-rich.

Genesis 47:14 *"And Joseph gathered **all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan** for the grain which they bought, and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house."*

### E. He was a shrewd businessman (47:15-26)

1. When all the money ran out Joseph strengthened Pharaoh's position.

Next he took livestock in exchange for grain. Verse 17 says *"So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses and the flocks and the herds and the donkeys; and he fed them with food in exchange for **all their livestock** that year.*

Then when Pharaoh owned all the livestock they returned to say, *There is nothing left for my lord except our bodies and our lands."* (v 18)

2. Joseph made the Pharaoh owner of all the land and all the people.

Genesis 47:19 reports the people's plight, *"Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? **Buy us and our land for food, and we and our land will be slaves to Pharaoh.** So give us seed, that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate."*

Joseph then moved all the people into the cities (v 21) to register them as the property of the Pharaoh then he supplied them with seed and assigned them back to the land to plant it as "share croppers (v 23)."

*"And at the harvest you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four-fifths shall be your own for seed of the field and for your food and for those of your households and as food for your little ones." So they said, "You have saved our lives! Let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and **we will be Pharaoh's slaves.**" (vv 24-25)*

Joseph put this into the written law and from that time on the Pharaoh always received one fifth of all the produce in Egypt (v 26).

This is the point in time when Joseph's family was forced to come back into his life:

Genesis 41:57 through 42:1-3 tells it this way. *And {the people of} all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the earth. Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, "Why are you staring at one another?" And he said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy {some} for us from that place, so that we may live and not die." Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt.*

## **GOD DESIGNED JOSEPH'S CHARACTER TO FIT INTO HIS PURPOSES:**

### **1. God Prepared Joseph Against PRIDE!**

Joseph grew up as his father's obviously favored son.

Joseph rose to the top in Potiphar's employ.

Joseph excelled in service to the Pharaoh.

Joseph became the Prime Minister of Egypt with total control of the world empire.

**There is no sign of pride evident regardless of position or power even up to his death!**

### **2. God prepared Joseph for PERSERVERANCE!**

Joseph was faithful to his father under his brother's bad treatment.

Joseph did his best work as a captive in Egypt in a foreign culture.

Joseph was effective even when he was in prison.

**There is no sign that he was discouraged, ever gave up or stopped trusting in God even when he was persecuted.**

### **3. God prepared Joseph to PERFORM!**

Joseph learned the lesson of obedience regardless of what his master was like.

Joseph learned to work hard regardless of who his master was.

Joseph learned to listen to and trust in God.

Joseph carried out God's plan to save the world.

**There is no sign that he ever stopped working as if his boss was Jehovah God—He was!**

## **III. JOSEPH ACHIEVES**

### **A. Joseph Faces His Ultimate Test (42:1-28)**

1. Joseph is about to meet his long lost brothers.

Will pride raise its ugly head? Will he lose patience? Will he continue to perform like God's man? All of God's work in his life over 20 years will be tested in a period of just a few days.

2. Remember their track record?

He was seventeen when they wrenched him from his life of privilege and sold him into slavery. He was about 30 when he stood before the Pharaoh to interpret his dreams. That makes him about 37 as the years of plenty end and the world-wide famine begins.

It has been twenty years since Joseph saw his brothers looking up out of a deep pit, looking back from a camel.

## **B. Meanwhile Back at the Ranch**

In chapter 42 the scene shifts to Joseph's family in Canaan.

1. The drought expands beyond Egypt.

Sometime in the first two years of the drought Joseph's family ran out of food. No problem, Jacob is very rich and he can send his sons up to Egypt to get grain.

2. Jacob sends all his sons, except Benjamin.

He is not about to lose his only other "love" child.

## **C. Face to Face with Little Brother**

1. Joseph's brothers bow down to Joseph (v 6).

They got to Egypt and immediately bowed down to the Prime Minister. Isn't it interesting that they are now fulfilling the very dream that forced them over the edge years before?

2. Joseph recognized his brothers (v 7).

With great effort he controlled himself and "he spoke harshly to them." In fact, he accused them of being spies, perhaps looking for weaknesses in Egypt's defenses or planning an attack on their stored food.

## **D. Why Was Joseph So Cruel?**

1. He is dealing with cruel men.

These are the men who massacred an entire city (Chapter 34).

These are the men who contemplated his murder (Chapter 37).

These are the men who sold him into slavery.

2. This is a test.

Have their hearts changed? Have they embraced their father's God?

## **E. Joseph Turns Up the Heat.**

1. He again accuses them of spying.

There response is that they are just a family of twelve boys. How could they be a threat?

They reveal that the youngest is at home with his dad and they had another who is now dead.

Joseph surprises his brothers with this statement.

In verse 18 he tells them "do this and you will live, **for I fear God.**" That's the last thing they ever expected to hear in Egypt. But this is just the way Joseph always talked.

39:9—"how could I . . . sin against God"

40:8—"don't all interpretations belong to God?"

41:16—"God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer"

41:51—"God has made me forget"

2. His brothers are terrified.

They have been carrying this load of guilt for over 20 years and now they finally admit it.

Genesis 42:21 and 22 ***"Then they said to one another, 'Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; therefore this distress has come upon us.' And Reuben answered them, saying, 'Did I not tell you, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Now comes the reckoning for his blood.'"***

Next week we'll conclude our study with those episodes. Let's finish this lesson with some observations that may be helpful for us as well.

## **LESSONS: PEOPLE RESPOND TO GUILT FOR SIN IN SEVERAL WAYS**

### **1. Some cover their guilt up.**

**DANGER:** In Psalm 32:3 David warns, *"When I kept silent {about my sin}, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away {as} with the fever heat of summer. Selah."*

**ANSWER:** In verse he gives us the answer to that problem, *"I acknowledged my sin to Thee, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD'; And Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin. Selah."*

### **2. Some rationalize their guilt.**

**DANGER:** To name sin something else just allows us to continue in our sin. Sin has not redeeming value. Romans 6:1 presents the most extreme case, *"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! . . ." How shall we who died to sin still live in it?*

**ANSWER:** Complete openness to the Holy Spirit as presented in Psalm 139:23 and 23, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way."*

### **3. Some harder their hearts to ignore guilt.**

**DANGER:** Ignoring guilt for sin brings a hardness of heart allowing continued sin. The writer of Hebrews warned in chapter 3 verse 7, *"Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,*

*DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED {Me} BY TESTING {Me} , AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS.*

**ANSWER:** But he doesn't leave us without positive advice in verse 12-14, *"Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is {still} called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end;*

**LORD, PREPARE US TO:**

**BE HUMBLE**

Proverbs 11:2 says, *"When pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom."* And Proverbs 29:23 advises us that, *"A man's pride will bring him low, But a humble spirit will obtain honor."*

**KEEP ON**

Hebrews 12:1 and 2 puts it this way, *"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

**DO OUR WORK**

We work as unto the Lord and so we will hear him say, *'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'*

—Matt 25:23

**RESPOND TO TRUE GUILT**

1John 1:9 states it clearly, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*