

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

A Journey Through the Wildernesses of Life

From Pit to Palace



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Fountaingate Christian Assembly
Cornwall, Ontario
Beginning February 2007

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

From Family to Foe to Friend

The life of Joseph in the book of Genesis carries many interesting themes. Some see it as the man who went from prison to praise. Many writers find many correlations of his life with that of Jesus Christ. Therefore, they point to Joseph as an Old Testament topology of Christ.

The life of Joseph cannot be studied without looking at the whole blend of lives that surrounded him and impacted his life. We are not islands to ourselves. What others do and say can have an effect upon what we become in life. People work as potters in shaping our lives. Some of the shaping is healthy while others leave us with character defects that must be worked out of our lives. Consider the **FAMILY TREE** that Joseph was hewn from!

A. Abraham/Sarah

1. Good Influences - They were his great-grandparents of faith. They were sensitive to the voice of God. Willing to lay aside all they had for God (family, home, area of birth) - (Genesis 12:1ff; 22:10ff)

Abraham knew how to worship God. He made altars wherever he went (Genesis 12:7,8; 13:4,18).

Abraham was willing to remain in the land of Canaan so Lot could have the well-watered plain of Jordan and end the quarrelling between their herdsmen (Genesis 13:8-12).

Abraham fought for the safety of those he loved (Genesis 14:1-16) even though the odds were unreasonably against him. He recognized the importance of putting God first in his finances (Genesis 14:17-20). He was also very careful about whom he associated himself with (Genesis 14:21-24).

He was willing to come into an everlasting covenant with God (Genesis 15:1ff) no matter how hard he had to fight for it.

2. Bad Influences - Abraham had times when his faith was challenged and he failed the test (Genesis 16:1ff).

Abraham allowed his wife to mistreat their maidservant Hagar (Genesis 16:6). He then tried to interfere with the will of God by not having Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed (Genesis 18:20ff).

He lied to Abimelech about who Sarah really was (Genesis 20:2).

B. Isaac/Rebekah

1. Good Influences - Isaac was willing to trust God in supplying a wife from his own relatives so he would not have to intermarry with the Canaanites (Genesis 24:3ff).

Rebekah was willing to leave her home, family and security to marry a man she had never met simply because she believed it was the will of God (Genesis 24:61).

Isaac received his father's inheritance (Genesis 25:5).

Isaac went to God in prayer (Genesis 25:21).

God blessed Isaac wherever he went (Genesis 26:12).

Isaac did not try to create war with his neighbours and also tried to keep a link with his past by reopening wells that had been filled up with sand (Genesis 26:18-22).

Isaac was also a covenant man (Genesis 26:24) and one who built altars to God (Genesis 26:25).

He made a feast for his enemies and sent them away in peace (Genesis 26:30-31).

2. Bad Influences - They allowed favouritism to develop in their family (Genesis 25:28).

Deceit seemed to flow from this family (Genesis 25:31-33; cf. 26:7ff). Could it have been linked back to Abraham/Sarah?

C. Jacob/Leah/Rachel

1. Good Influences - Jacob received the blessings of his father because he saw the value of the blessing (Genesis 28:3,4). He also entered into a covenant with God after building an altar (Genesis 35:7-12).

Jacob was willing to work hard for his wife (Genesis 29:18). He was also willing to work hard despite Laban's deceit (Genesis 29:25).

2. Bad Influences - Jacob used deceit to rob his brother Esau of his blessing from his birthright (Genesis 27:5ff).

C. Jacob/Leah/Rachel (Contd.)

2. Bad Influences (Contd.)

Leah felt that giving birth to their sons would win over Jacob's heart (Genesis 29:34). She gave birth to six sons (Genesis 35:23); her maidservant gave birth to three more sons (Genesis 35:26); Rachel gave birth to two sons (Genesis 30:1-2; 35:24); her maidservant gave birth to three sons as well.

Rachel was raised in a family that openly practised divination (Genesis 30:27; 31:19).

Both Jacob and Laban were involved in deceit in an attempt to increase their wealth (Genesis 30:31-43; 31:26,27).

There was a definite favouritism toward Joseph and Benjamin because they were the only children that Rachel bore (Genesis 35:24).

Is there a correlation to our nature, standards, and values and that of our family? I believe there is. We are taught both good and bad things. We must learn to accept the good and cast away the bad. Our lives become what we receive into it. **We CAN change the pattern of our past.**

Joseph walked the pathway of change. It was indeed a journey through the wilderness of life. It was a long road. There were times when he couldn't understand what was happening.

God knows what is needed. Let Him direct the changes needed in your life.

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1. The Principle of Forgiveness

"Total forgiveness" is a truth that many of us still have to learn. Forgiving others is the way we place ourselves into a position to be forgiven by God (Matthew 6:14,15; Luke 6:37,38).

*"Be kind and compassionate to one another,
forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave
you."*

Ephesians 4:32

Why do you think Paul wrote these words to the church at Ephesus? Learning to forgive is probably the most difficult lesson for us to achieve. Some believe that Joseph spent an extra two years in the dungeon because he still carried a strong bitterness against his brothers.

Why did Joseph say,

"mention me to Pharaoh . . . "

Genesis 40:14

When we try to vindicate ourselves, we tend to quench the ministry of forgiveness. Forgiveness is an expression of a restored heart.

Several themes seem to be promoted in the life of Joseph.

2. The Principle of Vindication - To "*vindicate*" means to "*justify or to clear of blame.*" Everyone wants to be vindicated when they have been misunderstood or mistreated. Vindication can become a fierce appetite of the mind - growing to become revenge.

*"Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room
for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to
avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord."*

Romans 12:19

Vindication is totally a work of God at His timing. If we try to interfere, God stops working on our behalf. He instead, teaches us what we must do to work with Him, not against Him.

2. The Principle of Vindication (Contd.)

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing so you will heap burning coals on his head."

21. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Romans 12:20,21

God needs to be allowed to vindicate us in His time and His way, with our cooperation of a right attitude toward our offender.

3. The Preparation for Service - The next most important lesson we need to learn is that we have not yet arrived. We are still in the process of becoming what God wants us to be. This is a very humbling recognition.

Often **preparation** is not gained even through **education** or **experience**. It can simply be received during those times when God drives us to our knees with deep, heart-wrenching tears.

God has a unique purpose for each of us. Therefore, the preparation will also be unique. God has a tailor-made plan for us.

We may be one of those people whom God chooses to be an *"explorer."* While some of us, are being moulded to become *"settlers."*

Isn't it interesting how God can use *"discipline"* or *"chastening"* to achieve His purpose in our life (Hebrews 12:5-11)?

4. Learning to Love - Our hearts can play deceitful little tricks upon us.

"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond all cure. Who can understand it?"

Jeremiah 17:9

Today we may think we have forgiven someone, but the next day we find ourselves rolling around in **self-pity, self-justification and personal hurt.**

Love is recognized in the Bible as the highest spiritual achievement we can acquire. Love is not an **instantaneous exchange** but rather a **perpetual goal.**

4. Learning to Love (Contd.)

Joseph learned to love even after God vindicated him. It was 17 years later that Joseph's father died and he made a statement which proved that love had found its way into his heart.

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

Genesis 50:20

God allowed Joseph to suffer to bring good results not just to Joseph but also for his entire family and to all those living in the famished land. Trouble caused the heart of Joseph to be lovingly stretched.

5. Learning How Much God Loves - It is because of God's love toward us that we often go through difficult situations. In the midst of these trials many emotions can arise. One of them is guilt. Guilt is a difficult emotion to handle because we think that as a Christian we should never feel guilty. In fact, we often feel guilty about feeling guilty.

Consider how Jacob felt after losing his son Joseph? Jacob was unable to see God in the midst of the trial. What a relief it was to know that God's plan had not been aborted. Everything had happened according to God's sovereign will. God did not want Jacob or his sons to feel guilty. When you know the beginning from the end as God does, you do not need to use such terrible emotional upheavals as guilt to damage your well being.

6. The Outline of the Gospel - This story is proof that the Old Testament is a "*shadow of things to come*" (*Hebrews 10:1*). Joseph was not the only one who was portrayed as a "type of Christ." The gospel story runs through this story like a scarlet thread.

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Genesis 37:1-11

A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

We begin our story of Joseph when he was about 17 years of age (Genesis 37:2). He had a lot of growing up to do. One of his weaknesses was that he was a tattletale. He often brought evil reports of his brothers to his father. His father would send him to find out how the brothers were doing (Genesis 37:14). There are usually two things that are apparent in a person who is a tattletale: they are usually **self-righteous** and pursue **self-vindication**.

Joseph was self-righteous. He tended to see himself as better than his brothers. We can be thankful that God shows us Jacob as “**A Diamond in the Rough**.” Most of us do have a problem of being self-righteous. **It’s encouraging to know that God can marvellously use someone who isn't perfect.**

Joseph was his father's favourite child (Genesis 37:3). This most often creates more problems than good. It probably helped Joseph in his self-confidence but it also alienated him from his brothers. There were personality and relationship conflicts in this family line that increased because of Jacob’s handling of things.

Have you ever wondered why God is not using you in a particular area that you feel you are ready for? God had a lot of sorting out to do in the life of Joseph. This young boy would probably blame his father for the way he was. How many have believed that they are the way they are because "my mother was this way" or "my dad made me what I am?" **There is no personality trait that God cannot overcome and change.**

We must accept the fact that all our parents have faults. They are working through their problems. We must be willing to forgive them and go on in life. It is without question that we are not to hold bitterness against our parents for their faults. They may have learned their manners etc. from their parents. **We must all come to the place of accepting that we are the way we are because we choose to be.**

Jacob gave Joseph the coat of many colours as a thoughtful gesture. It was no ordinary robe. It was "**richly ornamented**" (Genesis 37:3). The only thing worse than giving it was that Joseph paraded it in front of his brothers. It showed that he was a spoiled, arrogant child who had no sensitivity to his brother's feelings. They couldn't find a good word to say about him (Genesis 37:4).

It was actually Jacob's kindness to Joseph that turned his brothers against him. How often do our intentions get turned around and misinterpreted by those who are insecure? As parents, we must be very careful in showing favouritism to our children. Is embarrassment the reason for favouritism in families? A parent who acts this way is not thinking of the results on their child. It will bring problems. **The coat did more for Jacob than it did for Joseph.**

Thank God that the story heads eventually in the right direction. There is one main reason why Joseph's life became transformed. *"God was with him (Acts 7:9).* It was God that gave him the dreams he had. It was later that this gift of interpreting dreams saved his life and that of his family.

Joseph made the mistake of telling his dreams to his brothers. It caused them to hate him all the more (Genesis 37:4,5,8). His dream (Genesis 37:6,7) was not wrong. He simply did not use wisdom in revealing the dream/gift to his brothers and father. He made three mistakes (**tattletale; self-righteousness; pride**). God's revelations are often to be kept private for a period of time.

Just because we have a gift from God does not necessarily mean we know how to use it wisely. It didn't take any "dream expert" to interpret the dream (Genesis 37:8). Joseph had a desire to be admired by his older brothers. His gift was working well but HE wasn't. Just because we have a gift in operation does not mean we are ready to use it. Joseph needed **preparation** and **polishing** to use this gift effectively (Acts 14:22; I Peter 5:10).

A sculptor was going to make a horse out of a big block of marble and someone came along to him and said,

*** "How are you going to do that?" ***

He replied, *"That's simple. I just start chipping away, and I chip away anything that doesn't look like a horse!"*

You would think that Joseph would learn after making the mistake of telling his brothers his dream. Instead, he told a second dream to his family, this time including his father (Genesis 37:9-11). He opened his mouth again because he had not yet been chastened by the Lord; only by his brothers.

Why would God give him another dream after he abused the first one? Gifts do NOT mean God's approval of us! God sees us as DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH. Once the outer edges are removed, the beauty of God can be seen through us (Psalm 37:6).

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Genesis 37:12-24

WHEN OUR DREAMS ARE SHATTERED

There are many examples of God's leadership becoming impatient with God and His timing and plans. Moses came to the place after years of initial preparation where he chose *"rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season"* (Hebrews 11:25). The people though did not receive Moses with open arms. He had to spend another 40 years in preparation before delivering His people.

Have you ever had high hopes that God would use you in an area and then be disappointed that He hasn't? Why do we want to end the story of our lives before God is finished with us?

Jacob knew that it would be best if his older sons left for a while. He sent them out to graze upon a different hill. Their trip took them 80 miles north. Dothan has a fine well that still provides water for flocks. Dothan was about a day's journey north of Shechem.

Joseph's dreams were in some way a "wish fulfilment." Joseph wanted the admiration of his brothers but the robe and the dreams worked a reversal in his life - at least Joseph thought so.

When God speaks to us there is almost always an appeal to our self-esteem. Although God speaks in order to motivate us, the very self-esteem that He appeals to needs radical surgery before He can actually use us in His service as a leader.

If the same thing happened today, we would send Joseph to a psychologist who would probably come up with the following conclusion. **"Joseph you're under a great deal of stress because of your disoriented, disengaged and dysfunctional family.** Your father foolishly gave you a coat and now your brothers hate you. It's quite understandable that you would want them all to bow before you. Your dream is really your "wish fulfilment!"

Joseph had time to wonder about what had went wrong. He most likely thought he was a fool believing that God gave him the dreams. Just because God does something in our life does not mean that the process (or sometimes even the outcome) will be favourable to us (i.e.- Noah, Elijah, Daniel, Paul). It is during this time that some of the greatest "fiery darts" of temptation are thrown at us. This is normally the time we begin to question God.

God often allows things to happen in our lives that have far reaching implications - far beyond us. Yet we seem to egotistically wonder what benefit we will gain from it all.

Jesus' disciples also had to mature past the point of "**what's-in-it-for-me.**" They were working for God with a self-interest at heart (Matthew 18:1; 19:13; 20:20-28). They had to mature to the point where they could honestly say "**whatever-it-takes.**" There comes a time when self-interest must be swallowed up by God's glory (Isaiah 42:8).

When Joseph was asked to check up on his brothers (Genesis 37:12-14) he probably went planning to bring back another bad report (Genesis 37:2). This is perhaps the first real work he did in a while. His perpetual holiday was about to come to an end.

Joseph most likely was not able to see the need for the next step in his life.

"If I had twenty-five years left to live, I would spend twenty of them in preparation."

Charles H. Spurgeon

Our Lord is a perfect example of one who went through a long time of preparation before beginning His ministry. Jesus was 30 years old before He began to minister. It is believed that it took Him up to one year to gather all of the 12 apostles. He then took the remaining years to fulfill His earthy mission. If this is His example to us, shouldn't we also be willing to be properly prepared before entering ministry?

Dr. Lloyd-Jones used to say that the worst thing that can happen to a person is to be **successful before he is ready.**

Little did Joseph know that his days of comfort, ease and convenience were numbered.

Have you ever wondered why Joseph's brothers saw him at a distance? Joseph foolishly wore his coat (37:23). They probably saw Joseph before Joseph saw them. They were likely hidden by their flocks that they were caring for. So often people hide behind things while at the same time they are more than ready to expose others.

Notice what was still bothering them (Genesis 37:19,20)! They tried to thwart God's plan for Joseph. People still attempt to interfere with God's purpose for our lives when they can't accept God's processes. Conspiracies are still taking place.

Their bitterness grew to the point that even premeditated murder was not beyond them (37:18,20). Some people are intimidated when God puts a call upon others. It's easy for the name calling to begin (i.e. - "the dreamer; "Christians" - I Peter 4:16). There is no doubt that **jealousy** was at the root of the problem along with Joseph's **insensitivity.**

God always has a way to protect those He has not yet finished with. Reuben was the spokesman of grace in the midst of an ocean of bitterness (37:21,22). We may think that a pit is not a very appropriate place for this servant of God - but it was needed nonetheless.

One thing that had to be removed from Joseph for him to benefit from the pit was his richly ornamented robe. It was the sign of his superiority over his entire family, as were the dreams. **Since they couldn't remove the dreams - they stripped him of his robe.**

There was nothing/no one in the pit but Joseph and God. Without water and food he could not survive for long (Genesis 37:24). Has God ever allowed you to be placed in a pit like this where your survival is at stake?

It is here that we begin to believe that our **dreams were delusions.**

Our pits can be turned into **prayer palaces.**

Despair does not have to bring **defeat!**

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Genesis 37:24-30

FROM RICHES TO RAGS

Joseph has been given a distinct recognition for being "a type of Christ." One thing we must always remember when doing character studies in the Bible is that not everything will link up in the area of topology. We must rather look at the broad picture.

Many people in the O.T. are

"a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things"

Hebrews 10:1

The image is not the reality. It is just like a shadow reflecting the reality of the main object that is facing the light. Moses, Joshua, Samuel and David along with many of the prophets were a *"type of Christ."*

1. A Victim of Cruelty - Joseph was a type of Christ in this lesson because he was a victim of his brother's jealousy and cruelty. Sin was at the bottom of their feelings. The brothers would someday have to take responsibility for their actions.

“Christians are those who take responsibility for their own actions and quit blaming their troubles on their parents, other people, society, the devil or God.”

Unknown

A person has to realize that they are a sinner before they can be saved. Joseph had to realize that he had sin in his life before he could be saved from death.

2. A Victim of Conspiracy - The second picture of Jesus in the life of Joseph was the conspiracy of the brothers. It is very clear that Joseph's brothers wanted to kill him (Genesis 37:20). Jesus faced a similar conspiracy at the hands of Judas and the Jewish religious leaders (Matthew 26:47-68). They also took Jesus to Herod (Luke 23:6-12) as well as Pilate (Matthew 27:11-26).

3. The Victim of Mockery - Joseph was mocked (Genesis 37:20) by his brothers just the same as Jesus was mocked by His brothers (Luke 23:11). Jealousy was at the root of their problems (Acts 7:9). Pontius Pilate could detect this jealousy and envy in the hearts of the Jewish leadership (Matthew 27:18). Their attempt at finding witnesses left them hopelessly without any truthful accusations.

4. The Victim of False Witnesses - Joseph's brothers tried to cover up what they had done (Genesis 37:20,26,31,32). Anyone who commits a sin will need to commit another one - a lie - to cover up the first one.

False witnesses were brought before the Sanhedrin to accuse Jesus (Matthew 26:59-63). In order to attempt to cover up their hostility, jealousy and unrighteous motives, the chief priest and the whole Sanhedrin were responsible for bringing in these false witnesses.

"But if you do this you will be sinning against the LORD; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out."

Numbers 32:23

5. The Victim of Acts of Self-justification - Joseph's brothers wanted to clear themselves of any fault (Genesis 37:20). If they could abort the predestination of his life, they could prove that it was not God who gave him the dreams in the first place.

The Jews also tried to justify their actions while Jesus hung upon the cross (Matthew 27:39-43). If He didn't come down off of the cross, they would justify their actions because God would never allow Himself to suffer such humiliation. I wonder what they would have done if He had come down from the cross?

People use the same justification to escape the reality of God's Word. They say that it is full of errors so they don't have to live by it. Ask them to show you one of these errors. They love to hear of "pastors" who agree that the Bible has many mistakes or contradictions in it. By agreeing with their false teaching they don't think they need to make any changes in their lives.

6. The Victim of Respectable Neutrality - Reuben recognized that Joseph was being treated unfairly. He did not do all he could to stop the injustice from taking place.

The disciples also did not stop the heinous crime against Christ. Reuben as well as the disciples of Christ were ashamed and afraid to usurp their authority. King Agrippa also would not respond to what he knew was right when Paul addressed him (Acts 26:28).

Satan can deceive us into accepting the "lesser of two evils." We can become content (or in agreement) with a wrong decision (Genesis 37:27). They were content to sell their brother into slavery to the Midianites. The price of 20 shekels later became the price of dedicating a young male to the LORD (Leviticus 27:5). Jesus was sold for 30 pieces of silver (1 denarius = 1 day's work).

Jesus also turned from riches to rags in one day (Philippians 2:5-7; Luke 9:58). He accepted a **crown of thorns** in place of a **crown of gold**. Through Christ's action of humble obedience we have been made rich (II Corinthians 8:9). Joseph also was being prepared to bring riches to his brothers.

When you don't understand the purpose behind your suffering, don't give up! God has a purpose behind our troubles. **Spiritual growth carries a high price tag (II Peter 1:3-11).** Valuable things will cost us something. Don't expect spiritual nuggets without a cost or else they are most likely a "fool's gold."

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Genesis 37:24-36

WHEN GOD PUTS HIS FINGER ON US

When God puts His finger on us it usually changes our lives in a way that it affects our family, and it could even affect our nation and the world. Wonderful things are about to happen. Along with wonderful things comes things not so delightful.

We need to be careful in what we pray. Some have asked God for patience and then complained about the trials and tribulations that came their way (James 1:3). Do we really want the mind of Christ in our lives (Philippians 2:5)? We may get it without even asking for it. There is no indication that Joseph prayed for anything.

1. Preparation Time Comes Without Advance Notice - The first thing we notice is that Joseph's preparation came without any advanced notice. We often want God to tell us when He plans to intervene in our lives so we can be ready. God often hides His face when He begins to prepare and chasten us. **When we are falling apart - God isn't.** He knows things we don't understand (Isaiah 55:9).

2. Preparation Time Deals with Our Sore Spots - The second thing we often notice is that God puts His finger upon our "sore spots." Joseph had a coat of many colours that had to be dealt with. Why is it that God has to deal with the very things which are most dear to us? The coat had to go before God could use Joseph. **It was dipped in blood before being shown to Jacob (Genesis 37:31-32).** We never hear about it after that time. It becomes a dead issue. It is buried never to be retrieved.

Is there something that must go in our life before God can use us? (i.e.- Playing drums). God may have to destroy the thing in our lives that we value the most in order for Him to become first. God can also mend it and mould it back into something useful for His purpose.

3. Preparation Time Causes Us to Notice the Frailties of Others - The third thing about Joseph's preparation was that he recognized the sinful frailties of others. Neither Jacob nor Joseph could have believed that these brothers would act in such a terrible manner. We need to be careful who we admire. Anyone can fall from grace. Be careful not to set yourself up for a severe disappointment. We need to see people with a godly objectivity.

Joseph would need to learn who he could place his trust into (Psalm 118:8). God shows us the frailty of others to protect us from future suffering. Go with reality not naiveness.

4. Preparation Time Causes Us to Often Reach a Point of Utter Despair - The fourth thing God did was to bring Joseph to the point of utter despair. The pit he was in had no water - it was empty - he felt he was left to die (Genesis 37:23-24). God has often brought His servants to a place where there is no precedent to follow. Men of faith have no one to follow for their particular situation (Hebrews 11).

5. Preparation Time Brings Us to a Point of No Return - Finally, when God puts His finger upon a person, He will bring that person to a point of no return. Joseph was lifted from the pit (Genesis 37:28) and sold for 20 pieces of silver. Joseph was bought as a common slave and forced to live in Egypt.

Along the way there were points of relief. Joseph did get out of the pit and was given water and food. If Joseph knew he would have been sold to the Ishmaelites a few days earlier, he would have been extremely upset. Yet, after a few events, the change didn't seem so hard to accept.

"He doesn't compel us against our will; he just makes us willing to go."

Unknown

God has a way of bringing us through a horrible ordeal with joy, even though a new trial may be on the horizon (Romans 15:30-32). The next problem often seems mild in comparison. God is never too late; never too early; but always on time - His time! David also recognized that God was able to lift him out of his pit (Psalm 40:2,3,6-8).

"Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home."

John Newton
"Amazing Grace"

Joseph was unable to turn back the hands of time. God brings us to a place of no return for our benefit. But these are still very painful times! Joseph didn't get an opportunity to say goodbye to his father - good bye to Canaan or good-bye to the coat of many colours. One thing he could say good-bye to was the pit. The future was being planned without his help.

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Genesis 39:1-6

STARTING A NEW LIFE

Joseph had suddenly been placed into a strange new environment. This was not something he asked for or ever would have asked for. It was going to be difficult to adapt from being a child with a golden spoon to becoming a slave.

St. Augustine said,

"God loves every man as if there were no one else to love."

God also prepares every man as though there were no one else. Perhaps you've faced situations that have placed you into very uncomfortable situations. Have you or someone you know ever had to make abrupt changes because of sudden illnesses, accidents, loss of a job, a relationship breakdown, financial reversals?

How might we change in our attitude if we sensed that it was actually the blueprint that God was following to carefully conceive His will for our life?

God does us an enormous service when He makes us see that we can't return to what we've come from. We can literally waste days, months or years yearning to return to something that once was but will never be any more. God often prevents us from returning to our past situations sometimes so He can deal with our future in a more mature manner.

None of us like the "**PIT STAGE.**" Yet it is necessary to make us aware of our breaking away from the past. We all look with anticipation to the "**PALACE STAGE**" in our lives. But even the palaces will have their problems.

*** The 1990's highlighted some scandals at Buckingham Palace which proves that those living in palaces have their difficulties as well. Lady Diana had to make tremendous adjustments to conform to the demands of monarchy. Unfortunately, her ending was one of great sorrow.

If we don't like to be inspected, we must learn to stay out from under the lights. Nighttime darkens a lot of what is actually taking place. Turn on a bright light any summer night and you'll immediately see the air filled with all kinds of insects. ***

God was allowing Joseph to enter the palace so that the lights could be turned up for a short time. These times do NOT have to be unbearable. God does give times of relief even during these types of trouble.

There Were 3 Things That God Did to Make Joseph's Life More Pleasant for a Short Time (Before the lights went on!!)

1. Offered a Time of Rest - First, Joseph had a time of rest from his enemies. Things had gone well beyond the problems that Joseph created for himself. He had become the victim of cruel hatred.

God does have a time when He says, "*Enough is enough.*" God understands how much we can bear. He also understands what it takes to make us into **Clay pots not Crack pots.**

"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

I Corinthians 10:13

We all tend to think that our problems are unique. Yet someone has walked your path before. Some have made it a **pathway of victory** while others have made it a **place of despair and defeat.** Sometimes Egypt looks less troublesome than Canaan because we can escape from our brethren. Remember that God knows our limits.

2. Offered His Divine Presence - The second reason that made this trial bearable was because . . .

"The Lord was with Joseph."

Genesis 39:2

This is not to say that God was not with Joseph before. There are simply times when we sense His presence more than other times. It is usually then that we open ourselves up to Him. God must open us up of ourselves in order to fill us with Himself. **When God selects a person as His "minister" one of the key changes that needs to take place is that God must become precious to us.**

The life of discipleship is both promise and persecution, blessing and suffering. God does not take something from us without returning something of greater value.

2. Offered His Divine Presence (Contd.)

*"I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, 'no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel
30. will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields - and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.
31. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."*

Mark 10:29-31

3. Allowed Joseph to Prosper - The third thing God did was allowed Joseph to prosper in his new career. God did it to encourage him. There was a dungeon a short distance away but Joseph was not yet prepared to survive it. Joseph was not prospering in his gift. He was simply prospering in a natural way.

Joseph was paving the way for the nation of Israel to follow. They too would be accepted into Egypt and prosper for a time. Then the nation would be placed into slavery and treated harshly before their deliverance and promised reward.

God allows difficulties to come to expose other gifts which we haven't yet discovered. **Joseph's other gifts had to come out in time.** He was destined to be the future governor over all of Egypt. It would take more than one gift to succeed. Don't put all your apples in one cart because God knows how to upset the apple cart!

Joseph had to learn submission to his master, Potiphar, in order to become a servant to God. Potiphar was a man of prestige, class and wealth that was far beyond anything Joseph had ever seen. Joseph found favour in Potiphar's eyes because he made him his mentor.

Even Potiphar noticed that the LORD was with Joseph (Genesis 39:3). The word for **"LORD"** was **"Yahweh."** This was God's special revelation of Himself to His people. Potiphar would not have known about this God unless Joseph had witnessed to him.

It's one thing to witness - it is another to live it out. Christians should be the best workers (hard-working not lazy), conscientious, honest, likeable (loveable in time), not backbiters, careful not carefree - a person of high integrity.

3. Allowed Joseph to Prosper (Contd.)

Perhaps one last reason why Joseph adjusted so well in this new environment was because he kept himself detached from his new area. He was becoming attached to the Lord and detached from his new home. People who are too attached become less effective for God. We need to keep our sights on the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22). This not our home - we are only passing through. **Don't get attached to something that is not permanent.**

God blesses us with a new life to bring us into a greater level of spiritual growth. Be as clay in the Potter's hand. Potiphar's house is not our home. It is a stepping stone to something beyond. Step ahead - the pathway is set by God (Psalm 37:23,24).

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 39:7-12

A NEW KIND OF TRIAL

The testing of Joseph in the area of sexual temptation came about at a very significant time in his life. He was not yet a man who had been thrust into the public light. Some people maintain high moral standards because they would have too much to lose. They continue to resist and somehow manage to overcome this deadly temptation.

Joseph was a slave in a foreign country. He had no family and no reputation to defend. Yet when he was put to a most severe test he came through with flying colours. He was accused of doing something he hadn't done and even faced punishment for it.

God tests all His servants in just the right areas at the right times. King Hezekiah was severely tested . . .

"God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart."

II Chronicles 32:31

Our enemies can strip us from external distinction with all its ornaments, but wisdom and grace can never be removed from our lives unless we release it. We may be separated from our loved ones and country but we cannot be deprived of the presence of the Lord or communion with Him.

God does hide His face from us at certain times of testing. This does not mean that He is gone but rather that we cannot see or sense His ever-abiding presence. It is a wonderful feeling when we once again sense that He is near to us even though He has never left.

The true test of our devotion is what we do during trials. We are doing what is right if we pray and turn to God for help during these difficult times. We must be "*Instant in season and out of season*" - (II Timothy 4:2). "*In season*" is during the easier times when God's face is shining. "*Out of season*" is when His face is hidden and the trial appears overwhelming.

We cannot expect to face too many new trials until we overcome the old ones with dignity. When we see new trials, we can often rejoice in recognizing that we've just passed another test.

God watches every move we make and notices every thought we have during testings. **Every trial is significant.** No matter how senseless it may appear to us, God can work His plan through it.

Joseph had been faithful to Potiphar and God blessed Potiphar because of Joseph's presence (39:3). Joseph's presence also did not escape the wife of Potiphar.

"Now Joseph was well-built and handsome."

Genesis 39:6

She made the first move. It is unusual for a woman to be attracted by sight. Joseph had to have been a man of perception or else he never would have been put in charge of the house of Potiphar (Genesis 37:6a). Joseph became the target not the instigator of the sexual advance. We need to make a covenant with our eyes (Job 31:1) so that our eyes do not infect our hearts.

What should we do when we are tempted into sin? (Genesis 39:9)

- 1. Recognize Who We Are - "I" -** Joseph was an Israelite under a covenant with God.
- 2. Recognize the Depth of the Sin - "*wicked thing*"**
- 3. Recognize Who We Are Really Sinning Against - "*and sin against God.*"**

Joseph recognized that Potiphar had trusted him with everything in his house (including his wife - 39:8). Trust can be broken by a single act.

Little is really known about Potiphar's wife. We do know that she was an officer's wife. She would have been blessed to have the latest in fashion. She would be able to move in the upper class and circles of her society. Normally her kind would have little to do with servants. Decency, reputation and conscience are all sacrificed when lust is given a front seat. She was very determined to fulfil her fantasy (Genesis 39:10).

It is amazing that Joseph was able to withstand her continuous attempts to seduce him. Samson gave in twice to similar pressures (Judges 14:17; 16:16-17). It was Joseph's love for God that kept his mind pure (Genesis 39:9). Many people are able to maintain a certain level of moral purity because they fear being caught - or perhaps they haven't met someone like Potiphar's wife. **Nobody is exempt from temptation.**

Those who would keep themselves from harm MUST keep themselves out of harm's way. His hormones were probably quite active knowing his youthfulness. This woman was able to bestow many favours for his act. **Opportunity favoured the temptation.**

If our love for God is not greater than the intensity of the temptation - we will give in. When we are at the top of the world, we are in a dangerous position that the devil can and will attempt to take advantage of. It's best to be tried before we reach that position. If God has called us to serve in a leadership position, we can expect to be tried in this area.

Some people have used the excuse for their sin that they were in love. **Love is not an excuse for sin.** Any sexual involvement outside of the bond of marriage is sin. What appears as love is really lust. If Potiphar's wife really loved Joseph why did she lie and turn against him for his rejection of her advances.

We must accept the consequences for our actions. We are the ones who ultimately make the final decision (Proverbs 7).

"Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house."

Proverbs 5:8

"But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people."

Ephesians 5:3

*"Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness . . .
22. Flee evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord with a pure heart."*

II Timothy 2:19, 22

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 39:13-23

LOSING THE BATTLE TO WIN THE WAR

One of the most important tests to pass before being able to be used of God is to withstand being punished for doing well and keeping quiet about it.

Joseph was cast into the prison because he did everything right. Joseph was walking the way Jesus would without having the benefit of reading the N.T.

"But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and endure it, this is commendable before God.

21. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps."

I Peter 2:20,21

Jesus bore the cross of Calvary not because of His sins but because of ours. There are many ways to approach the problems of life. If we tend to complain, we can actually lose out on a blessing that comes through trials.

"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.

13. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when the glory is revealed.

14. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."

I Peter 4:12-14

When we go through trials, we sometimes think that God is at the root of the problem. Some people think that God is punishing them for something they did. This may be true but often there is a greater purpose to be served than punishment.

"The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to

anger, abounding in love.

9. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger forever;

10. he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay according to our iniquities.

11. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;

12. as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

Psalm 103:8-12

God does not "get even" to us for what we've done wrong. He got even with sin at the cross. What He continually does is "**chastens us**" in order to prepare us for a more fruitful life.

"Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness."

Hebrews 12:10

It is often the ones who are "**blameless (perfect-KJV) and upright**" (Job 1:1) whom God chastens in order to prepare them to receive further blessings. We may not understand all the workings of God but patience and trust can usher in a greater blessing.

"because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and punishes everyone he accepts as a son."

Hebrews 12:6

The word "**disciplines**" also means "**to train, to educate or to chasten.**" One form of neglect for illegitimate children is their lack of discipline. **Proper discipline stems from love not from hate if it is administered correctly.**

*** One day D.L. Moody was seated on a platform when he heard a preacher say, *"The world has yet to see what God can do with one man who is utterly committed to him."*

Moody decided that day, *"I propose to be that person."*

Within days his church burned down and shortly after his own home burned to the ground. He began to understand Acts 14:22

"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." ***

God could have vindicated Joseph because of the fact that he was falsely accused. We sometimes need to **LOSE A BATTLE TO WIN THE WAR.** We must learn to keep quite and let God act.

When we act - God doesn't. When God acts - we shouldn't.

Joseph's name was never cleared by Potiphar or any other Egyptian. Jesus also was never vindicated by those who sent Him to the cross. Jesus never tried to clear His name. Jesus never strove for personal vindication. His goals were much more profound. **Jesus didn't want to WIN THE BATTLE AND LOSE THE WAR.**

Joseph had been through plenty of trials already.

1. Betrayed and despised by his brethren
2. Sold into slavery
3. Falsely accused and cast into a prison

God used this situation to teach Joseph that it was truly God who had caused him to prosper (Genesis 39:2) earlier in Potiphar's home. If God can do something once He can do it again, no matter what the circumstances.

A prison is not a likely place to prosper. Yet this is the very place that God used to again prosper Joseph (Genesis 39:21). God doesn't need a palace when **He can transform a prison into a palace.** Don't be too hasty to change your situation until you feel God is truly leading you out.

Ask yourself - DO I WANT TO WIN THE BATTLE AND LOSE THE WAR?

Trust God! He knows what He's doing and what is best for us.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 40:1-23

VINDICATION DELAYED

Preparation is not so painful when you choose it yourself (college training), but it often becomes painful when we don't recognize it for what it is. Somehow we can't bring ourselves to believe that our situation has come to refine us or shape us into the image of God.

Joseph was being prepared with an extraordinary plan because he was going to be given an extraordinary task. God does not and will not waste our time performing unnecessary changes in our lives.

The butler and baker were put into jail because they committed a crime. It's amazing how God used these two men to link into Joseph's situation in prison. On one particular night both the butler and the baker had a dream. Normally they would have sought out an interpretation from the many astrologers and soothsayers. It was a lively business in Egypt.

It's interesting that God chose this avenue to reveal the future to these "criminals." This is the "love of God" not the "law of God" at work.

Joseph was with them long enough that he recognized that their facial features indicated they were concerned about something. They quickly explained about having a dream and could not understand the meaning of the dream (Genesis 40:8).

God used this very insignificant day and event to set another stone in Joseph's foundation. We must all learn an important lesson if we are to be used of God.

"Who despises the day of small things? Men will rejoice when they see the plum line in the hand of Zerubbabel."

Zechariah 4:10

God often begins small and insignificantly in the moulding process of our lives. He still works in peculiar ways, His blessings to perform.

It's interesting that the butler (cupbearer) and the baker were sad (Genesis 40:7). After all it was Joseph who was placed into the prison unjustly. They were there because they had committed a crime. Joseph was cheering up the other prisoners while in his state of unfair bondage. While we are waiting to be encouraged, we can still encourage others (Psalm 84:6).

"For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows."

II Corinthians 1:5

We can comfort others with the same comfort that we receive from Christ. Joseph was having a day when he focussed his thoughts on the needs of others. Many of God's foundational blocks are simply aimed at getting our eyes off our own problems which will lead us away from self-pity.

God gave Joseph an opportunity to be used of Him. If we simply take the opportunities that God sets before us we will have more than enough to do. It was no coincidence that two men had disturbing dreams during the same night. Joseph took advantage of the situation before him.

"Do not interpretations belong to God?"

Genesis 40:8

When the two different men had similar types of dreams on the same night Joseph could be sure that God's hand was at work. **The dreamer (Joseph) was about to mature into another dimension of his heavenly gifting.** He was now going to **interpret the dreams** of others.

God has used dreams to communicate His truths to us. It does not mean that we can't have significant dreams today, but they are seldom used. God has many different avenues to use when fulfilling His will.

"your old men will dream dreams"

Acts 2:17

We need to use extreme caution when allowing our dreams to guide our decisions. We must remember that our enemy does have access to our thought patterns (II Corinthians 10:4,5). He will do his best to warp our thoughts if we allow him to.

Since God had communicated to Joseph through dreams, he was more sensitive to hear God's voice through this avenue.

Since coming to Egypt, Joseph had not exercised his gift. **Have you ever felt that God has placed you and your gift on a shelf?** You may wonder why God gave you a gift when you have no opportunity to use it. You may also feel that you are now in a place that it will never be used. Who would ever think that Joseph would be able to exercise his gift while in prison?

God often places His leadership into positions which are very much beneath their capabilities just to test their reaction. You can feel either overtrained or humbled. Who would ever believe that Joseph's greatest gift could be used while he was incarcerated?

Joseph was given earlier in time the exact interpretation of the dream given to the chief cupbearer (butler). There was no doubt that it would happen as planned. You would think that all was going to go well from here on in. But a problem manifested itself in Joseph's life.

"But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of prison.

15. For I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon."

Genesis 40:14,15

Joseph was trying to manipulate his future. Some of the "old Joseph" was still alive and kicking. There was a lack of trust in God. Joseph had to learn that God does what He wants to do when He wants to do it! Time was still needed for another foundational block to be fitted into Joseph's life (Genesis 41:1) . **I truly believe that we need to guard our thoughts much more than we need to guard our lives.** It is from our thoughts that we often place our lives in danger. Danger reaches its peak when we try to manipulate God's plan for our life. Don't compare your situation with others. God has a special plan just for you.

Joseph had to mature to the point where he would be willing to void himself of any defensiveness, self-pity, and manipulation. God passed the sentence onto Joseph when he came up for parole after two more years (Genesis 41:1).

When we think we can't take any more - God knows differently. We can and we must. It is God's way of bringing to the surface what no simple trial would cause to emerge. It took Job a long time to come to the same conclusion. Job cried out to God in prayer,

"I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours will be thwarted . . .

5. My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you.

6. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Job 42:2,5,6

It was at that point in Job's life that his future came into clear focus. God was not able to bless him in the measure He wished to until that point.

Don't try and nudge the arm of Providence. We must learn to move because God doesn't move out of our way until He knows the way is clear. **The sooner we give into God's WILL - the sooner we can go on in God's PLAN for our lives.** We often try to convince ourselves that we've given in when we know we haven't.

What are some of the key foundational blocks that God had to place into Joseph's life?

1. Trust
2. Forgiveness
3. Humility
4. Fear (reverence) of God
5. Sensitivity to God
6. Sensitivity to Others
7. Comfort through trials

What were some of the foundational blocks that God had to remove from Joseph's life?

1. Fear
2. Self-pity
3. Self-Vindication
4. Self-righteousness
5. Pride
6. Deceit
7. Manipulation

Are you willing to allow God to replace the bricks which are blocking His plan for your life? **Are you willing to be a bit unstable as He is given the right to be the Master Builder in your life?** Remember that God knows the support system you'll require as He sets your foundation in place and begins to build up the walls of protection around your life.

If we foolishly go ahead of Him I can say with full assurance that a storm will come along and blow against your feeble construction. Only what God builds will last (II Timothy 2:20-21).

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 41:1-16

WHEN GOD'S TIME HAS COME

"Like the trampling of an army, so is the force of an idea whose time has come."

Victor Hugo

Scriptures indicate that God does have a time to fulfil His will (Mark 1:15; Galatians 4:4-5). There is a reason for God's timing.

"He has made everything beautiful in his time."

Ecclesiastes 3:11

God has chosen to work within the confines of time. He chose to allow trees to grow from seeds and then saplings into mature and fruitful works of art. They could have been fully mature overnight. A great oak tree takes more than 100 years to become fully matured. A squash, on the other hand, is produced over the short period during a summertime.

There is a blessing for those who learn to be patient with God's timing.

"Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him."

Isaiah 64:4

"No eye has seen, no ear heard, no mind has conceived (neither have entered into the heart of man) what God has prepared for those who love him."

I Corinthians 2:9

*** One of the greatest experiences I've shared with people is when I marry a couple. The ultimate moment is when the bride makes her way down the aisle and finally joins her groom.

This part only lasts for a few seconds in comparison with the rest of the ceremony as well as the lifelong marriage. Yet, it is a moment that cannot pass without having a significant impression upon us.

No one can speed up the moment. The union takes place in its proper time. Those who try to rush the event lose a great deal of significance in their marriage. ***

We must learn the lesson not to try to "speed God up" to fit into our timetable. Have you ever felt like the Psalmist who cried out . . .

*"How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?"*

Psalm 13:1

Joseph had been told by God that he would be used. But nothing seemed to indicate that it was going to happen. Was he going to have to be prepared all of his life? No one could have told him that he needed more preparation. Most of us are the same in this way. We sometimes think we are mature while we continue to play our childish games with God.

"When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me."

I Corinthians 13:11

God wanted to make a man out of Joseph so he could send him to do a man's job.

*** Queen Mary became known as "*bloody Mary*" because of all the Protestants that she had murdered.

One day she had Hugh Latimer and a young man named Ridley tied to the stake in the Balliol ditch at Oxford to burn them.

Young Ridley began to tremble. The fire was soon going to sweep over their bodies. Latimer shouted over his shoulder to the young boy,

*"Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, **and play the man.** We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England, as I trust shall never be put out."* ***

Play the man or woman! God is looking for maturity in our lives. It is often a scarce commodity in our generation. When we allow God to fulfil His time in our lives much can happen. We must all face at least one major question when dealing in this area.

HOW DO WE KNOW WHEN GOD'S TIME HAS COME?

1. When We Have Utterly Come to the End of Our Own Strength (Genesis 40:23).

This is a difficult stage to reach. None of us like to think that we are helpless. Joseph tended to be assertive and ambitious. Normally there is nothing wrong with that kind of thinking. But God did not want to exalt Joseph through the cupbearer. Joseph had to allow his efforts to die in order to give life to God's plan. If God is not speaking maybe we should wait until He does. Don't attempt to put words in God's mouth like "God told me . . .!"

2. When He Does a Work Utterly Outside of Ourselves (Genesis 41:1-7).

Who would have ever had thought that two years after the butler and baker's dreams had taken place that the Pharaoh would have some dreams of his own? Pharaoh had two consecutive dreams which could not be explained naturally. Joseph had absolutely nothing to do with Pharaoh dreams. Joseph never planted a seed in the king's mind.

3. When All Human Resources Fail (Genesis 41:8).

The king had access to the magicians and astrologers who were often used to interpret dreams. They were useless this time because the dream came from God - not the human mind nor influenced by the devil.

God still shows the world many things which cannot be interpreted. God's truth only comes through God's wisdom. God often destroys the wisdom of the wise and frustrates the intelligence of those who deem themselves as intelligent (I Corinthians 1:19).

4. When God Works Successfully at the Precise Point We Have Failed (Genesis 41:8).

Joseph placed his hope on the butler who failed him. The king used the greatest occultists of his day but they could not explain the dream (Genesis 41:8).

The palace had been busy with astrologers coming in with their full confidence and leaving dejected. The butler could not help notice all the extra traffic and yet nothing being accomplished.

5. When Someone Pleads Your Case (and knows all the facts) Without You Opening Your Mouth (Genesis 41:9-13).

It was at that point that the butler "just happened" to remember about his dream several years before. The butler went before the king and had Joseph brought before him. Joseph had tried and failed to get out of prison. God did what Joseph couldn't do when His timing was right. We must remember that God is the greatest lawyer we have (Job 16:19).

God has a way of bringing out the facts so that our gifts will be required to accomplish His will at His timing.

6. When God Reaches Us Where We Are Without Any Effort on Our Part (Genesis 41:14a).

Where was Joseph? In the dungeon. If they knew where he was you can be sure God knew. God reached for Joseph. Pharaoh simply was the errand boy God used to accomplish His will.

This is the truth of the gospel portrayed in the O.T.

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ dies for the ungodly."

Romans 5:6

God has succeeded in bringing your case to light. He did it all by Himself. He did it with a perfect plan at just the right time (Galatians 4:4).

Do you feel like you are in a dungeon and God has forgotten you? Take heart!

7. When God Makes You Fit to Stand Before the King (Genesis 41:14b).

Joseph was shaved and changed his clothes. **When God brings us from the prison of our past, He cleans us up and changes our countenance.** We are given a new raiment. We are given a robe of righteousness. Soon we will stand before the King of kings.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 41:1-16b

WHEN OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

It is very seldom that we hear of a prime minister, president or king/queen being converted to Christ. Yet we've been thankful to have leaders such as Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, George W. Bush as well as leaders from South Korea, Africa and Central America (to name a few).

"Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were of noble birth. 27. But God chose the foolish things of this world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong."

I Corinthians 1:26,27

This does not mean that God cannot and does not save the rich and famous. It does not take any more grace to save our Prime Minister than it does to save you. God still reaches into the heart of the "unreachable."

When we look at this chapter through the eyes of Pharaoh, we see a much different story. Here was a very powerful man living in a state of desperation that God placed into his life.

Let us review what just has taken place. Pharaoh had two dreams that linked together. He sent for his magicians and wise men who were unable to interpret the dreams for him. He became desperate. Even the elite in society reach a point where they recognize how utterly frail and helpless they are.

The chief cupbearer "just happened" to remember that Joseph, who had interpreted his dream, was still in prison. The cupbearer gave a glowing report on what had happened a few years earlier.

When a person is in a desperate situation they will take help from whomever will be there. This does not always prove to be a positive experience. Yet God was at work in this situation. The process of God's providence came into play.

Lets consider the events surrounding this story so we can understand the principles that come into play WHEN OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS.

1. People Usually Begin by Turning to Those They Know Best

Who was it that Pharaoh initially sought help from? Was it not the magicians and the wise men of his empire? These men earned their living dealing with problems surrounding the supernatural. It's not healthy to be fruitless when the leader of the world needs help. I don't doubt that some of them tried to give Pharaoh an interpretation. Nothing they did satisfied the Pharaoh.

God often uses situations to force people to get to know someone they would never usually associate with. God has a way of changing who our friends and close associates become.

2. People Often Know When Witnesses Are Wrong

It would be very easy for Pharaoh to try to cover over his problem if God had not turned up the heat. Who was Pharaoh to determine whether his magicians and wise men were right or not in their interpretations?

Have you ever faced a problem you couldn't seem to solve? Have you went to your usual sources and found no answer/help? Have you ever ended up disillusioned and bewildered? Has it ever occurred to you that you were looking for the answer in the wrong place? God may well have allowed the situation to surface in order for you to become much more sensitive to the deceit of this world's wisdom. Even good people who are often used of God may not be the source that God wishes to use this time.

3. People Often Have/will Take Risks

The butler is a very unlikely person to become involved. Would you stick your neck out like he did? Wouldn't it be easier to remain silent? No one expected the cupbearer to become involved. If you've been in a prison, I'm sure that you would be careful what you would say before the man who was responsible for your previous incarceration.

The butler took a great risk just to request an audience with the Pharaoh especially when the problem was still unsolved. What if this Hebrew slave was not able to interpret these dreams? Would the cupbearer be so fortunate as to have his life spared another time? I think not. The butler was willing to lay his reputation, job and life on the line because of the trust he placed in a common slave (not the God of the slave - Genesis 41:12).

4. People Are Given an Opportunity for Humble Service

"Today I am reminded of my shortcomings (faults)."

Genesis 41:9

God often gives us opportunities to prove our humility and desire to serve Him.

"If I perish, I perish"

Esther 4:16

Opportunities are not always easy to respond to. It may require us to humble ourselves before others in order to serve them. **When opportunity knocks we often either defend ourselves or accuse ourselves.** The cupbearer did not attempt to impress the Pharaoh. He simply told him what he knew. There was a man who had been placed in confinement who was able to interpret his dream.

Is this not the essence of pure witnessing? We simply tell what we know - Nothing Else - Nothing Less - Nothing More. We are simply telling people what God has done to set us free from a life of bondage.

5. People Will Allow Faith to Find its Place

It took faith for Pharaoh to believe the butler. It took faith to act so quickly. No research on Joseph's life was called for. He didn't need the facts substantiated. The Pharaoh believed the word of an ex-prisoner. One is not saved by checking out all the other options (Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism etc.). One is saved by faith alone. Most often more questions are available then there are answers.

People often find it a point of ridicule when we declare that everyone must accept Christ.

Pharaoh set the seeds of faith in place by believing the butler. It would make it much easier to believe Joseph.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 41:17-38

RECOGNIZING THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

The events contained in this chapter are amazing to say the least. This chapter unfolds the events that lead to the turning point in Joseph's life. God had allowed him to be abased. Now He was going to exalt him. Pharaoh was about to come to an astounding conclusion.

"Can we find anyone like this man in whom is the spirit of God."

Genesis 41:38

Pharaoh listened to Joseph's interpretation and believed it. In fact, he believed it enough to "*put all his eggs in one basket.*" His life and the future of his nation were placed upon the shoulders of a common Hebrew slave. It would require continued faith to watch the future unfold. Would you be willing to wait fourteen years to see God's plan unfold? Pharaoh did.

Something caused Pharaoh to place this much trust in Joseph. **He recognized the Spirit of God in Joseph!!!** This is very significant when we are being used of God. We will also be telling others to put all their eggs in one basket based upon what we have to say. Can they see enough of God's control over our lives to believe what we say?

God's Spirit will not give witness to an unholy life!!! Would God be comfortable going any place we go; hearing anything we say; or seeing anything we see? We will be eventually ineffective if our life is not in a right place. People don't need to know all about our life. The Spirit of God will make witness of it to them. The Holy Spirit deals only in truth (John 14:17).

"For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God."

12. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us . . .

14. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him . . ."

I Corinthians 2:11,12,14

How Can We Know the Witness of the Spirit?

1. There Will Come a Time of Great Peace

*"God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires
(answer of peace.- AV)*

Genesis 41:16

It must be said though, that when God *begins* to work in our lives we often feel the opposite of peaceful. Pharaoh was initially troubled by his dreams (Genesis 41:8). The only way to receive God's peace is to trust Him - believe His Word.

2. There Will Be a Non-hesitant Authority

Joseph listened to Pharaoh as he told of his dreams. It seems like Pharaoh was still unsure whether Joseph was going to be able to help him even after all his wise men were unsuccessful (Genesis 41:24). Joseph became a Non-hesitant authority (Genesis 41:25). As soon as Pharaoh stopped speaking, Joseph began.

There is often a calm authority sensed when the Holy Spirit takes over in difficult situations. The three Hebrew slaves in Daniel's day also witnessed this Non-hesitant authority before king Nebuchadnezzar.

*". . . what God will be able to rescue you from my hand?
16. Shadrach, Mechach and Abdenego replied to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.'*

Daniel 3:15,16

Peter also witnessed this Non-hesitant authority when he stood before thousands of people who assembled in the streets below the Upper Room in Jerusalem. When God has a word to speak through us, He will also give us the boldness and compassion to bring it forth.

3. There Will Be a Coherent Witness

God is able to make all things work well. Things come together when He is given liberty to perform His will. Pharaoh thought he had two dreams - Joseph knew that it was only one main dream given in two parts (Genesis 41:25).

It is amazing to watch the Holy Spirit work. He is able to make all things fit together (Romans 8:28). The Spirit gives unity to our lives. It is His nature.

The Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures to be written. There were more than 40 writers (i.e - politicians, fishermen, military leaders, cupbearers, prime ministers, doctors, kings, tax collectors as well as a rabbi used). It was written over 1600 years (60 generations). Written in many different places (i.e. - wilderness, dungeon, hillside, palace, prison, island). It was written during times of peace as well as war. It displays extremes of joy and sorrow. It was written on three continents (Asia, Africa and Europe). It was written in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek).

"For all that, the Bible is not simply an anthology; there is unity which binds the whole together."

F. F. Bruce

God gave us two covenants/two testaments for us to compare the coherence of His thoughts (I Corinthians 2:13).

4. There Will Always Be a Personal Touch of the Spirit

"The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do."

Genesis 41:25

God is interested in YOU. His plans for you are good. Joseph unveiled Pharaoh's dreams in great detail. God is a God of detail (ie.- creation). God is also interested in unfolding the detail of His will for our lives.

5. There Will Always Be a Confirming Element

The Holy Spirit relates His truth to us by often building on something we've previously experienced. He confirms/establishes His Word often through witnesses. God does not work in isolation. There is never a contradiction. His Word never changes therefore, if any change is required it will need to be on our part – not God's part.

The king never regretted putting all his eggs in one basket. It was very clear to see that the Holy Spirit was with Joseph (Genesis 41:38).

Don't let anyone deceive you. God has given His witness to what He does. We need to pray that we become more sensitive to that witness. We usually respond to the witness of man's spirit. We must become more sensitive to the witness of the Holy Spirit in these closing days of time.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 41:39-45

HUMILIATION TODAY - EXALTATION TOMORROW

At last we've reached a point where pain gives way to pleasure. There is no doubt that God designed both us and this world so we can find joy and have pleasure. The doorway into its fullness is called holiness. Holiness is the pathway to genuine pleasure.

God is not interested in keeping our lives under dark clouds.

"For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."

Psalm 30:5

One of the ways that God brings about a change in this area is when He vindicates us before others. God wants our name ultimately cleared of all that has harmed our reputation. None of us are experts at humiliation. We all want our names cleared in one way or another.

There is nothing wrong with being exalted, provided we get there the right way.

"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Luke 14:11

There is a time for God to lift us up.

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the God's mighty hand, that he will lift you up in his due time."

I Peter 5:6

We must remember that Joseph's exaltation did not begin with himself. It was not what he did or who he was that tugged on the heart of God. God's Word was going to be confirmed no matter what anyone said or did to try to stop it. God's Will and Word is eternally secure.

God's promise are *"yea and amen to those who believe."* God made it very clear through Joseph's dreams what the future would hold.

". . . the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

Genesis 37:9b

Joseph was going to be exalted. His trouble was that he misjudged God's timing.

Do we sometimes misjudge God's timing? Our story has now gone on for thirteen years since the time of the dreams. Who says the number thirteen is an unlucky number? God had a vindication in mind that would go much further than a single exaltation. It would begin by God exalting Joseph by the hand and word of the king (pharaoh) of all the earth. How much more shall the King of kings exalt those who humble themselves before Him.

God seemed to wait until Joseph lost his zeal to be vindicated and exalted. Perhaps he had lost most of his hope and faith that God would do it.

"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."

Luke 9:24

Isn't it amazing that God allows thirteen years to pass before placing Egypt into the hands of Joseph? There are times that God will give us Egypt as an escape from those who are out after our lives (cf. Matthew 2:13). Then He will bring us back from it in order to exalt us (Matthew 2:19-23) in His time.

God gave Joseph Egypt because it didn't mean that much to him. He could be trusted with it. It would never become his god (Genesis 49:29-33). Look what God did for him.

"You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people [Potiphar and his wife included] are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.

41. So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.'

42. Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. (Contd.)

43. He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, "Make way [or bow down]! Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt."

Genesis 41:40-43

We must remember though that all this exaltation had not yet measured up to the dreams that Joseph had been given by God. The nature of THIS exaltation was found in the form of a vindication.

There Was a Two-part Vindication That Took Place Which Confirmed the Witness!

1. Intellectual Vindication - If you truly have the Spirit of God guiding your life you will not have to tell everyone. They will see its fruit in your life. It will bring about a long-term, consistent growth. You will be active in dealing with sin every day in order to become better conformed into the image of Christ. You will have the mind of Christ.

It was Pharaoh who gave Joseph an intellectual vindication.

"there is no one so discerning (discreet-KJV) and wise as you"

Genesis 41:39b

This word is only used twice in the O.T. (Genesis 41:33, 39). It speaks of someone's *intelligence (mentally distinguished, diligent, eloquent, perceiving, prudent, understanding.*

The word "wise" gives further enforcement by seeing him as "skilful or artful."

2. A Moral Vindication - No Pharaoh would place a man in such a position if he couldn't trust him morally. More leaders fall morally than in any other way. It becomes an embarrassment for both the person falling and the one who appointed him and those he serves.

Pharaoh was basically overturning the accusation of Potiphar's wife. She had falsely accused him of an indiscretion in his life. Pharaoh felt that no one was as discreet as Joseph.

It is amazing who Pharaoh gave to Joseph to be his wife.

"Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenah daughter of Potiphera (not Potiphar), priest of On, to be his wife."

Genesis 41:45

Don't try to figure out God's future for your life. You don't need to know. Simply trust Him! He will exalt you when He feels the time is right. Don't question what He is doing. His ways are greater than our ways (Isaiah 55:9). There is no way to calculate what God will do as you surrender to Him. Remember that for every disciple of Christ, the crown(s) will follow the cross!

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 41: 42-44

FINDING YOURSELF

Have you ever found yourself feeling at home in a place that is not your home? Joseph was from Canaan but God was able to finally bring him home while living in Egypt.

Home is not **WHERE** but **WHEN**.

"Grow where your planted"

We should not live a life trying to find the ultimate place. We rather should be considering God's timing in where we are. We must remember that God has a purpose in everything He does.

*** When we left Fort McMurray, AB to attend Bible College we found the adjustment a lot more difficult than we ever imagined. We soon felt discontented and began to question whether we had really heard the voice of God.

Now that I look back, I can see that we were in God's perfect will. It was **His timing** not ours. As time went on we began to accept the changes that we were not expecting or appreciating.

WHEN we came to grips with the fact that God had surely called me to Bible College, then we began to truly "**FIND OURSELVES**" and God's unique plan for our lives. ***

There are a number of similarities between the life of Joseph and the Prodigal Son. The Prodigal Son prematurely got his inheritance and went into a far country. Joseph was also given his inheritance (a coat and a spiritual gift of interpreting dreams) before going into Egypt.

Both of these young men wanted to enjoy life. Yet both came to an abrupt change in the midst of fulfilling their dreams. **When the pleasure came to an end, so did their reason for living.**

There came a point in the prodigal's life that he "*came back to himself*" (Luke 15:17). The moment he did, he was essentially back home. He may have still been in a swine pen but his heart was back home. Many people are living in luxury on the outside and yet inwardly in swine pens concerning their feelings of contentment!

We are at home when we are willing to allow God's will to take over our destiny.

This is where we can find rest and haven from a hectic, chaotic world. It is where you can put your feet up when surrounded by the world with all its problems. It's an internal condition. It's when we are at peace with God and ourselves.

Who could have convinced Joseph that living in Egypt would be his niche? Who would ever have believed that God could turn around such an act of jealousy into such an abundant reward.

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform
He plants His footsteps in the sea
He rides upon the storm."

W. Cowper

God has a way of changing our calendar dates in order to fulfill His will. God took thirteen years to prepare Joseph when Joseph thought he was ready all the time. All of us think we are teachable. We can all sing the right songs.

*"Take my life and let it be
consecrated, Lord to Thee"*

*"I'll go where you want me to
go, dear Lord,"*

But when God says to go to Nineveh, we choose to head to Spain on the first boat out. We convince ourselves that God has now changed HIS mind because we had a little talk with Him.

Certain misconceptions were in the life of Joseph as in many of us that had/have to be dealt with before we can "FIND OURSELVES" and finally come home.

1. We Overestimate the Satisfaction We'll Find by Getting Our Own Way

The prodigal son made the same mistake (Luke 15:12). Joseph felt that if the butler "remembered him" (Genesis 40:14,23) that things would begin to go well for him. God overruled Joseph request because He was not willing to substitute the BETTER for the BEST. We should always consider it a favour when God does not follow Our desires.

"So he gave them what they asked for, by sending a wasting disease upon them"

Psalm 106:15

"He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their souls."

Psalm 106:15 KJV

When there is something we want but we can't seem to have, it may be because God's kindness is withholding it from us.

2. We Underestimate the Power of the Holy Spirit

Joseph seemed to feel that nobody would ever recognize his gift. At least not the people who were important in his life. When God gives us a gift, He is the one who will guide us in its use - and especially in its timing. **More damage has been done through untimely gifts than most of us would like to admit.**

It was God's power that changed the future for Joseph

"Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God.

39. Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning as wise as you.'"

Genesis 41:38,39

3. We Underestimate the Security of God

This often becomes the outcome of someone who has experienced such a series of unfortunate experiences. Terrible experiences will eventually affect us psychologically. We are not a tower of strength in and of ourselves.

Joseph had a reason for feeling insecure. He was cruelly mistreated by his brothers, thrown into a pit, sold as a slave to the merchants. Then things seemed to turn around only to take another discouraging twist. He was unfairly judged for committing an act he never did. A dungeon became his home for a number of years.

When we have enough people disappoint us, discourage us, & turn their backs on us, we can become very insecure. We begin to believe things which are just not true. We often feel that we can't trust ANYBODY!!!

God can, during these times, lift us out of our feelings of insecurity by showing us His hand at work. God made Joseph second in command over the entire world. That sounds to me like an abrupt change of circumstances.

God turned the situation around also for Elisha and his servant when the Arameans surrounded them at Dothan. Elisha felt the security but his servant was in a state of panic. Elisha did NOT underestimate the Security of God.

"O LORD, open his eyes so he may see. Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."

I Kings 6:18

*"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
2. I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'"*

Psalm 91:1,2

Also read Psalm 91:3-13

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 41:46-52

MERCY SET FORTH

There is a time in life when God **speaks** and there is a time when He **acts** upon His Word. We can be sure that if God has said something that it will come to pass. Nothing that we will do can change God's perfect will. What He says - He shall do!

*"... you have exalted above all things your name
and your word."*

Psalm 138:2

He knows the right word to give us at the right time when we are sent out to work for Him.

*"On my account you will be brought before
governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the
Gentiles.
19. But when they arrest you, do not worry about
what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be
given what to say,
20. for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of
your Father speaking through you."*

Matthew 10:18-20

God's Word will always come to pass exactly as He has said.

*"I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly
not pass away until all these things have happened.
35. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words
will never pass away."*

Matthew 24:34,35

It was difficult for both Joseph and Pharaoh to accept God's Word, but they chose to even though it put their life and reputation on the line. There is no indication that they were ever fence sitters.

Let us study God's words to discover how His mercy takes place.

- 1. Abundance Was to Proceed Leanness** - Genesis 41:1,2, (41:17,18)
 - Genesis 41:5 (41:22)
 - Genesis 41:46-49

God made it very clear how the events were to unfold. Be very sceptical upon vague prophecies. We serve a God that is very specific. Those involved in "divining" today are often very vague in their "spiritual guidance." They play the field of their callers or customers until they produce a certain "mapping" of the individual. If they are wrong, they will go on to something else to take the focus away from their mistake.

Much can be told about a person simply by the way they speak, dress, and respond to certain questions etc. God could not be accused of using these types of tactics when dealing with Pharaoh.

Another indication that God was in this prophecy was that Joseph knew what to do in response to the Word from God. Have you ever met someone who felt that God spoke to them but couldn't understand the significance of the word? Perhaps God was preparing them for something in the future to test their obedience. I do get concerned when people tell me that God only speaks to them in mysteries.

There has to come a time when God reveals the purpose of His Word. God also builds upon His Word. He may give us the skeleton of truth today, but He will also give the tendons, flesh and skin of its truth in times to come.

"Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it.

49. Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure."

Genesis 41:48-49

God gave to Joseph not only the plan but also the energy and the resources to carry out the plan for fourteen years. Just think of the extreme pressures placed upon Joseph to oversee the entire abundant harvest of all of Egypt for seven years. None of the merciful crop was wasted during these years. God gave not only energy but also ingenuity to administrate the harvest. He can and is doing it again and again!

The amount that Joseph collected was interesting (Genesis 41:34). **God was taking a double tithe from the land so that there would be enough during the lean years.** People often question whether God can provide for their needs during times of "famine." If we obey what God tells us to do there will always be a storehouse to receive from.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

20. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

21. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Matthew 6:19-21

The people were more than able to live off the 80% of the harvest because the fields overproduced. If we put God first, He will honour our faith. If we don't, we will continue to struggle with our finances. We may have to live lean even during abundant times if we forsake God's Word. Don't make it a point of giving God your leftovers. Don't expect to get God's first while giving Him your last. Give Him the first fruits of your labour.

Many people are foolishly laying up their treasures on earth and leaving their account in heaven virtually empty. It doesn't make any sense to me especially when we will be spending eternity in heaven. Should not our heart be directed toward the place of God and things that promote His kingdom?

God gave Joseph two very important object lessons (10% each) that stayed with him the rest of his life. One he called "*Manasseh*" while the other he called "*Ephraim*." This proves to me that God grants us mercy in the places we need it most when we put Him first.

"Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, 'It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household.'"

Genesis 41:51

Every time Joseph held Manasseh in his arms he was reminded that he could forget about all that his brothers did to him. The firstfruits of his loins helped him to see that "*blessed is the son that openeth his mother's womb.*" These sons were born before the time of famine (Genesis 41:50) to prove the mercy of God.

The second son born to Joseph also carried a significant name.

"The second son he named Ephraim and said, 'It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.'"

Genesis 41:52

Who would ever imagine that Joseph could become so fruitful in the land of Egypt. Even Joseph's final blessing from his father Jacob reinforced this truth (Genesis 49:28).

"Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over the wall."

Genesis 49:22

The Church is now living in the time of plenty - spiritually speaking. We need to be using ever effort to make the best use of what God has given us. **The day is soon approaching when seven years of incredible famine and tribulation will again grip our world.** Most refuse to accept that it will ever take place. God expects us to store up (while we are living in Egypt) in whatever way He tells us to. I do not mean to hoard the things of life. Rather we should be making heaven's treasures rich by what we say and do. Our faith must also have works to it.

It is not to say that some of us are not living in a time of trouble but the trouble does not have to overcome us if we put our trust in God. His mercy still endures to the end.

"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

John 16:33b

God wants to pour out a blessing that we can't contain. If we put into God's storehouse on earth He will pour out heaven's floodgates.

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.'

Malachi 3:10

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 41:53-57

MERCY WITHHELD

There are two sides to every coin. There is the head and there is the tail. We must face either the truth or the consequence. These are just a few facts of life. God has set certain laws that He has created into His universe which must be followed. Those who refuse to abide by God's laws will come to an abrupt awakening.

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."

Galatians 6:7

Sometimes we think that we will never be able to withstand the judgement of God for our past sin. Cain felt that way. He found out he was wrong.

"Cain said to the LORD, 'My punishment is more than I can bear.'"

Genesis 4:13

The seven years of abundance portrayed God's mercy. There is a time when even God's mercy comes to an end. That is when the time of His wrath begins. These verses show us the result of God unveiling His wrath to the world. It is so important to be in the right place with God when His wrath is being poured out on this earth.

"There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food."

Genesis 41:54

Isn't it in our nature to find it hard to believe that difficult days are ahead when we are living in the land of plenty? Sincere preachers have been warning the Church for decades that the time of plenty is about to end. Their prophecies are not based upon recent downfalls but rather upon the mind of Christ who knows the beginning from the end.

God has warned us throughout His Word that a day of His wrath is to come upon this earth.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

John 3:16

"Since we have been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him."

Romans 5:9

"and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead - Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath."

I Thessalonians 1:10

God's wrath will (or possibly even maybe already) be poured out upon all the earth regardless of race, creed or colour. Yet even within the midst of wrath can be found mercy (Genesis 41:54).

"Lord I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy."

Habakkuk 3:2

Even though the whole known world was in a state of severe famine, there was bread in Egypt. Many people have asked why God allows famine to come upon the world. One thing we do know is that His Word predicts it.

"There will be famines and earthquakes in various places."

Matthew 24:7

Both of these types of disasters cause people to turn to God. They seem to cause men to set aside their pride. Pride is often the biggest reason why people do not turn to God and surrender their will to Him.

God is both a God of mercy and justice. Mercy can be given or withheld. Justice, on the

other hand, must always be given. In justice there can be mercy. We often want mercy but without justice because we know we've been wrong. God is always just - yet He can choose to show forth His mercy but He is not bound to do so.

When the land was struck with famine, Egypt was also struck. The only difference was that they had prepared for the upcoming famine (Genesis 41:54). The only reason there was bread in Egypt was because their granaries had been filled during the rich years.

Some people erroneously think that during the time of the upcoming "great tribulation" that those having the mark of God will be spared from ALL the effects of God's wrath. The only people spared from the full extent of God's wrath will be those who have been raptured.

Consider the outcome of God's wrath in the years to come.

Seals

1. White horse - conquest/war - Revelation 6:2
2. Red Horse - remove peace - Revelation 6:4
3. Black Horse - famine - Revelation 6:6
4. Pale Horse - death - Revelation 6:8
5. Martyrdom - Revelation 6:10
6. Great Earthquake - Revelation 6:12-17

Trumpets

1. Hail/fire/blood (1/3 earth, trees, grass)
- Revelation 8:7
2. Sea turns to blood (1/3 sea creatures, ships)
- Revelation 8:8,9
3. Star falls from heaven (1/3 rivers, streams bitter)
- Revelation 8:10,11
4. 1/3 Sun, Moon and Stars darkened - Revelation 8:12
5. Scorpion torture - Revelation 9:1-6
6. 200,000,0000 army (1/3 mankind killed)
- Revelation 9:13-21

Bowls

1. Ugly/painful sores - Revelation 16:2
2. Sea to blood (everything dies) - Revelation 16:3
3. Rivers/streams to blood - Revelation 16:4

4. Scorching Sun - Revelation 16:8
5. Sun darkened - Revelation 16:10
6. Armageddon - Revelation 16:12-16
7. Lightning, thunder, earthquake, hailstones
- Revelation 16:17-21

Joseph was placed in the midst of the severe famine to demonstrate God's mercy in the midst of His justice. There will also be an opportunity for God's elect who have not accepted the mark of the beast to repent during the time of the Great Tribulation. God in His mercy has warned us ahead of time because He finds no favour in punishing the ungodly. He would much rather that they repent (II Peter 3:9).

God raised up Joseph to prepare the way thousands of years ago for the Egyptians and their surrounding nations. Today God has raised up His Church to be the storehouse of blessing. We are not only to receive God's blessing but also we must pass it onto those in need around us while the time is still at hand.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 42:1-20

EXPOSING OUR SIN

Most if us want to keep certain things hidden or undiscovered. It is the mercy of God that causes our sins to be exposed.

"O Daughter of Zion, your punishment will end; he will not prolong your exile. But, O Daughter of Edom, he will punish your sin and expose your wickedness."

Lamentations 4:22

It is one of the most gracious acts of love that God does when He exposes our sin. The worst thing in life is never to get caught and have the hidden sin eat away at us. It is never a question of **WHETHER** God is going to expose our secret sin but rather **WHEN**.

The best time for discovery is now. All sin that is exposed and dealt with on this earth is limited in its exposure. Usually it is kept before the individual and God. Yet most of us complain when God "discovers our sins."

"Why should any living man complain when punished for his sin?"

Lamentations 3:39

It was a long time coming for the brothers of Joseph. Twenty two years had passed since their guilt was unpunished, unconfessed and unnoticed. Deep down inside everyone knows they must allow justice to take place.

"He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

Proverbs 28:13

"A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed without remedy."

Proverbs 29:1

There Are at Least 9 Graduated Steps That God Took to Expose or Discover Their Sin.

1. Joseph Began to Speak Harshly to Them (Genesis 42:7,30)

"You must know God as an enemy before you can know Him as a friend."

This is often a sign that God is at work. People begin to sense their change of position and separation from God before they make any decision to change. It is often at this time that they feel God is being harsh with them.

"As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. 'Where do you come from?' he asked."

Genesis 42:7

2. The Brothers Realized Afresh the Importance of Sonship (Genesis 42:11a)

One truth seldom taught is our brotherhood to each other. We are sons/daughters of God. Therefore, we are brothers and sisters with each other.

"We are all the sons of one man . . ."

Genesis 42:11a

Dysfunctional families are one of the greatest tools that the devil uses to conceal sin. The "silent protection" of a dysfunctional family must be exposed before long-lasting results can begin. They were considering themselves as "sons" but were excluding Joseph at the same time.

3. The Brothers Became Defensive (Genesis 42:11b)

"Your servants are honest men, not spies."

Genesis 42:11b

It is not uncommon for people to become defensive when God begins to expose hidden sins. Why is it that people feel they need to defend themselves from statements which are easily recognized as wrong? **We often highlight what others say wrong about us to avoid entering a discussion about what we know to be true about us, especially if that area requires change and we don't want to change.**

4. The Brothers Were Forced to Think Again about Their Covered Sin (Genesis 42:13)

Covered sin is never truly concealed. We know it is there and that will always bother us until we confess and renounce it.

People often gloss over the facts to make things appear as they are not.

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

Genesis 42:13

"We are honest men . . ."

Genesis 42:31

People who tell lies long enough begin to believe their own lies. We can say things in many ways to "protect our sinful habits." **We have a defence system called "repression."** We have the capability to deny what we think or what we have done. We can do it voluntarily but more often we do it involuntarily.

5. Joseph Intruded into Their Most Painful Area (Genesis 42:15)

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

Genesis 42:15

Why does God put people before us who can identify and expose the painful areas of our lives? Some people believe it is because God hates them. The fact is that His love reaches to our most painful areas.

The brothers knew that their father would not be pleased with such a request. It would open up the wound again in his life. God had to heal Jacob's wound as well.

6. Joseph Put a Hard Proposal Before His Brothers Which Appeared like Unfair Punishment (Genesis 42:16)

"Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth . . ."

Genesis 42:16

As unfair as this punishment seemed it was hardly the punishment they deserved for their earlier cowardly and vicious act against Joseph. They knew they had a brother back in Canaan and that they were not spies.

It is interesting that Simeon (Genesis 29:33) was eventually chosen to stay (42:24). The name "*Simeon*" means "*one who hears.*" The LORD opened Leah's womb because she was not loved as much as Rachel (29:31,33).

7. The Ten Brothers were Shut in a Prison for a Short While (Genesis 42:16,17)

It took three days of prison to bring out the truth.

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

Genesis 42:21

People can find freedom from guilt when God is responsible for our "bondage." **God temporarily binds only to set people free.** Daniel, Jonah, Peter, and Paul are all a case in point.

8. God Provided an Alternative Punishment (Genesis 42:18,19)

God often brings forth a strong message prior to the one that is mixed with grace.

"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?"

Matthew 3:7

God does not gain anything by prolonged punishment. He does not take pleasure in punishment. Changes can and will take place for those who soften their hearts.

9. What God Once Wanted He Still Wanted (Genesis 42:20)

"But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die."

Genesis 42:20

The message was also the same to Jonah after being expelled from the fish's stomach - go to Nineveh. **There is no use in us trying to change God's mind. We know that God is still trying to deal with us and expose our sin(s) when He doesn't let go until He gets what He wants.**

Thank God for His mercy in not allowing you to continue to head in the wrong direction.

**God's mercy will never lead us
where His power cannot keep us.**

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 42:18-24

GOING BY THE RULES

At this point in the Scriptures, twenty two years passed since Joseph was sold into slavery. He was standing before his brothers in Egyptian clothing/hairstyle as the governor of Egypt. He chose not to speak to them directly but rather through an interpreter. This indeed would have taken a great deal of restraining.

Joseph's goal was greater than just seeing his 10 brothers. He also wanted to see his entire family. God was setting His plan in place and Joseph had to be very cautious not to abort the process.

Benjamin was one of the keys to the puzzle (Genesis 42:18-20). Everything that Joseph demanded had to be followed to perfection.

"Do this and you will live, for I fear God."

Genesis 42:18

"Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD."

Leviticus 18:5

"For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess."

Deuteronomy 30:16

**We can choose to live three different ways
in order to be found righteous before God!**

1. Righteous by Law

The whole of the law is basically summed up in the decrees, statutes, and commands recorded in the Mosaic Law. This has often been called “legal righteousness.” It may appear like the way to go but a closer look often reveals the problems associated with it.

*"All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do **everything** written in the Book of the Law.'*

*11. Clearly **no one** is justified before God by the law, because the righteous shall live by faith."*

Galatians 3:10,11

I have met many people over the years who have tried to live out their Christianity this way. It requires 100 % perfection. We must live holy every minute of every day in thought, word and deed. Anyone who wishes to be saved by their works has their work cut out for them.

*"Therefore **no one** will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin."*

Romans 3:20

"For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it."

James 2:10

Joseph listened to the conversation by Reuben (Genesis 42:21-22) and couldn't help but recognize a tone of self-righteousness. Reuben initially had every opportunity to save his brother from that terrible act of injustice. **All Reuben did was pile guilt upon his brothers.** It is so easy to justify ourselves while forgetting about our own sins.

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye . . .

5. You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye."

Matthew 7:3,5

1. Righteous by Law (Contd.)

Reuben had tried to buy some time but he had not taken as firm a stand as he could have.

"Throw him into this cistern here in the desert."

Genesis 37:22

Reuben was making the mistake of comparing his sin against the sin of his brothers. This is always how self-righteousness displays itself. Most scholars think that Joseph would not have lived without Reuben's intervention. He probably would have died in the pit.

"We do not dare classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves, When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise."

II Corinthians 10:12

2. Righteous by Grace

We have an advantage of looking back at the account and studying what was taking place. God was using Joseph to challenge his brothers into the fact that no matter what they did, the past could not be changed. No one can truly pay the price for another's blood (Genesis 42:22). Righteousness must be gained another way. The stains of past sins run deep and wide.

"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."

Romans 3:22

Joseph was given the privilege of displaying this righteousness by grace through a series of events. At times it may have appeared like he was being a little harsh with his brothers. In fact, he was making them see the foolishness of trying to live by the law that he was placing upon them (Genesis 42:18,21). God also sent the Law to prove to man that he could understand that he can never find acceptance through its legal requirements.

3. Righteousness by Christ

Joseph becomes a type of Christ in the story. Jesus hears everything we say and understands fully the details of the history our lives. We can never pull the wool over His eyes. We need to be more conscious of the fact that Jesus hears every word we say.

The reaction of Joseph must often be that of our Lord's as well.

"He turned from them and began to weep."

Genesis 42:24

It must break our Lord's heart to see and listen to the division and guilt that comes about by a self-righteous Christian. Would our conversations change if Jesus walked up to us in the middle of some of them?

It is because that God is righteous that He some times has to turn away from us. He is still touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin.

16. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Hebrews 4:15,16

It is because of Christ's righteousness that we find grace and help in our times of need.
Joseph also,

"Turned back and spoke to them."

Genesis 42:24b

Only Jesus can meet all the requirements of the Law and therefore He can turn to us and offer forgiveness. His heart cries out for honesty that will break the chains of self-justification. We must all play by the rules but also remember that He who is holding the Game Book has a right to call all the infractions and determine the penalties.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 42:25-34

A TROUBLED CONSCIENCE

Everyone has been born with a conscience. It is the place where we reflect upon the things we do and say. It deals mostly with our past.

Our conscience is a very important part of our life. It can determine whether or not we live a life of happiness. When all is said and done, we have to live with ourselves and the decisions we've made.

When people give into temptation, they try to suppress their consciences. Some go further down this path than others.

"The Spirit clearly says that in the later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

2. Such teachings comes through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron."

I Timothy 4:1,2

People who become preoccupied with immediate gratification can eventually destroy the protective mechanism that God has placed within them. They usually resort to alcohol, drugs, or illicit sex. Everyone must come to the place when they must face up to the fact that they have allowed themselves to become bound to their habit(s).

It is during these times that people must look beyond themselves for help. Their past has often proven that they are incapable of overcoming this recurring problem.

It is here that one of the brothers stands out. His name was Simeon (meaning "**one who hears**"). He was the second child born to Leah and Jacob. His birth was a message to the family.

"She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, 'Because the LORD heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too.' So she named him Simeon."

Genesis 30:33

Most people who walk around with a guilty conscience believe that God will not listen to their prayers because He doesn't love them. We must keep a balance of the Word of God. God at any time can offer His mercy because He knows what the future holds.

Simeon emerges as a substitute for the guilt of the brothers. He is like our second brother - The Second Adam. Joseph had first intended to keep all the brothers (Genesis 42:16) and send only one back to their father. He changed his mind (Genesis 42:19) and offered an alternative punishment. Simeon was their RANSOM. He prefigured the life of Christ.

"just as the Son of Man did not come did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Matthew 20:28

Simeon stands as an example of "The Scarlet Thread" than runs through the Bible. Someone has likened this truth as taking a strong needle and placing it through the Bible so that when you open it you clearly see a scarlet thread (symbolic of the blood of Jesus) holding the pages together.

How many times do we, like Joseph's brothers, set out on a journey believing that it will be uneventful? They had simply went to buy corn and return to Canaan. They probably had not given too much thought to what had happened to Joseph. Twenty-two years had passed. Some people can go much longer than that before a series of events unlocks their hidden past.

All of a sudden the brothers had to deal with their sin again.

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

Genesis 42:21

I wonder how Joseph felt when he heard these words. God brings people right to the brink of vindication to test whether they will try to interfere with God's plan. Joseph passed the test with flying colours.

What determines whether people will have to deal with their hidden sins during this life or not? The answer is found in God and God alone. It is God's mercy that allows us to deal with our sins while on earth. It is better now than later.

"When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world."

I Corinthians 11:32

"For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."

II Corinthians 5:10

It may cause agony and shame to deal with our sin now but think of what it will like if we wait until we stand before the Lord. Be thankful if you have ever had a guilty conscience, especially if it has brought you to repentance. It is God's love that brings us to a point of confrontation with our sins.

"For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you."

II Corinthians 2:3

There Are 2 Signs of a Troubled Conscience

1. Memory - It is amazing how something that has been concealed for so many years can come back into our minds with such clarity. They truly felt that were being punished for their terrible crime against their brother. It takes more than time (22 years) to clear a troubled conscience.

Memory is God's tool that is used to bring healing NOT condemnation. A surrendered heart will move into the arena of forgiveness.

2. Fear - God used Joseph's act of mercy to bring out the fear that had plagued the brothers for decades. What should have come as good news became bad news.

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

Genesis 42:28

2. Fear (Contd.) - Beware when you respond in fear at a situation that should bring you much joy. **Here is a classic example of a troubled conscience. Unconfessed sin will lead to fear.**

"He who conceals his sins does not prosper but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

Proverbs 28:13

"The wicked flees when no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion."

Proverbs 28:1

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love."

I John 4:18

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

John 14:27

The brothers were quickly approaching their worst fear. They did not want their father to know what they had done to Joseph many years ago. When we know that God is seeking after us, we would do better to confess our sin(s). We have 2 choices in life. Judgement will take place in life as a response to unconfessed sin.

"David said to Gad, 'I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men.'"

II Samuel 24:14

It is God's mercy that deals with our troubled consciences. Don't be concerned if He deals with you now. The benefits of it far exceed the trouble that it creates.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 42:35-38

THE FOLLY OF SELF-PITY

What emerges in this text is a classic demonstration of self-pity. We must not be too hard on Jacob because we have all fallen into this trap at some time in our lives.

Many have asked the question whether there is a cure for self-pity. The irony is that although it is a very real condition, it is never based upon complete facts. Jacob shows that self-pity is unjustifiable. The fact of his self-pity was that he thought Joseph was dead. Just because he didn't know the truth did not change the facts. The fact was that he had his facts wrong and he allowed self-pity to be built upon those incorrect facts.

The one area that Jacob became united with his sons with was fear. Fear births more fear. It can become an endless cycle in families.

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

Genesis 42:35

The root cause of the self-pity was fear. Self-pity can most often be traced to fear. A characteristic linked to fear is punishment.

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love."

I John 4:18

Fear brings along with it a torment that leads to punishment. We either punish ourselves or we punish someone else. Jacob's words brought further punishment to his sons. Self-pity and the desire to strike out at others are defence mechanisms to bolster our self-esteem.

There Are Several Things Present When Self-pity Takes Over

1. Blame of Others

"Their father Jacob said to them, 'You have deprived (bereaved -KJV) me of my children.'"

Genesis 42:36

We must be very careful when we attempt to blame others for our problems. Who was to blame for the present situation? Were not all of them at fault?

- a. Jacob - favoured Joseph.**
- b. Joseph - flaunted his position**
- c. Brothers - despised his position**

We never do any good when we blame others because we will in turn condemn ourselves. People foolishly think they are relieving themselves of blame\pain when they really are creating more. Everyone in the family had to come to grips with what they had done.

2. Bad Conclusions Without Evidence

"Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin."

Genesis 42:36

Jacob feared the worse. He read into the situation more than was there. We can feed the wrong assumptions of bad news. It grows into the "Bad News Syndrome." People reach the point where they don't want to be contradicted about their wrong bad news even though they are wrong in their conclusions.

3. Sympathy Is Demanded

"Everything is against me."

Genesis 42:36

Have you ever met a person who thrives on self-pity? If you have a problem, they have it even worse. Sympathy can be a cruel taskmaster that is relentless in its demands. It can lead to further problems emotionally.

4. Paranoia Can Set in

Self pity can lead to this very serious mental illness which detaches people from reality. People who enter this state believe in delusions and seldom trust anyone. Paranoia can result from extreme cases of self-pity.

5. Refusal to Accept Simple Advice

Reuben tried to offer his father some simple advice. Reuben was even willing to place both of his sons on the line to appease his father's self-pity.

"You may put both my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you."

Genesis 42:37

Jacob would not accept Reuben's help.

"My son will not go down there with you;"

Genesis 42:38

Self-pity makes it difficult to bring oneself to listen to the advice of others.

6. Insensitivity to the Feelings of Others

"My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left."

Genesis 42:38

How do you suppose that comment made the other sons feel? Benjamin was not the only son left. What about Reuben, Levi, Judah, Asher etc.? They were also his sons. It was like he was disassociating himself with his other 10 sons. A comment like this can create walls of division for years. Jacob was repeating his mistake of the past. Only now he was favouring Benjamin.

This shows how counterproductive self-pity can become. No one makes any progress when wallowing in this pit. We may feel good for a short time but we will soon see its dangers.

7. It Threatens Others with Greater Guilt

"If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow."

Genesis 42:38

Be very careful about expressing your words when they are driven by self-pity. Jacob was going to live through the ordeal. **It is God who numbers our days not the circumstances and troubles of life.** Thank God that He overrules our wrong conclusions.

Don't accept the guilt that others try to place upon you. If you accept it, you will be placed under their control. It will become a form of bondage that could influence the decisions you make for the rest of your life.

Self-pity is indeed a folly that must be dealt with head on. Don't let it play games with your life. It has no right to govern your life. You are the only one who can choose to allow either it to control to you or you can control it. Don't give it an inch, because it will eventually grow into a mile. Deal with it today if you need to.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 43:1-25

PREPARING TO RECEIVE THE FORGIVING GRACE OF GOD

"It is a thing most wonderful,
Almost too wonderful to be,
That God's own Son should come from heaven,
and die to save a child like me."

W.W. How

It continues to amaze me how God places us in uncomfortable situations in order to bring out the full meaning of His forgiving grace. Have you ever had to walk through a strange series of "coincidences" in order to open your mind to something that you had previously dismissed as being nonsense? I believe that many times these events can be traced to the way that the forgiveness of God works.

It normally appears much easier to look back and accept the fact that God was at work as time progresses and events take place. We often ask ourselves why we took so long to surrender to the will of God. God loves us enough that He won't take "no" for an answer.

This chapter displays how we often react when we are totally forgiven of something. We usually don't respond correctly to the grace of God. Joseph's family reacted in fear. They were forgiven but couldn't accept the truth.

WHY WERE THEY FORGIVEN? It came about as they were placed into a situation that they couldn't change. Joseph had given them an inflexible condition that they couldn't change.

"The man warned us solemnly, 'You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you'"

Genesis 43:3

The only thing that Joseph requested was that they bring their youngest brother with them when they returned for more food. Joseph knew they would have to return. The famine was very severe (Genesis 43:1).

God allowed the situations to rise up to expose how dysfunctional this family was. Trials can help us to walk through our family troubles! Do we realize that God allows difficulties to arise to purify us? Trials can refine us in our weaknesses if we allow ourselves to stay in the refining fire. Too often we jump away screaming from the flames that will eventually purify us.

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

7. These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

I Peter 1:6,7

The brothers recognized that they had no choice but to follow the stern warning of Joseph. This trial again pointed out to the brothers that they were trying to hide the fact that they had cruelly dealt with Joseph 22 years prior (Genesis 43:7). **As long as we are not willing to face up to truth we will have to bear the weight of our sin as well (Genesis 43:9).**

The longer we wait to respond to the "inflexible conditions" that God places upon us, the longer we will live in a condition of repetitive need.

"As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice."

Genesis 43:10

Isn't it just like us that when we have no where else to turn to we try to offer God something He doesn't need or He hasn't requested? The father sent gifts that were considered as luxury items or dainties. We can all live on plain food without dainties, but none of us can survive on just the dainties without the plain foods of life. We can thank God that the needful and most useful is also the most cheap and abundant. People continue to attempt to barter with the luxuries of life for the common bread of heaven.

Joseph never requested their luxuries. In the same way God wants obedience better than sacrifice.

*"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;
and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and
without cost."*

Isaiah 55:1

Jesus has made it very clear what He demands of us to receive His blessings. He doesn't ask for our gifts in order to receive His gifts.

The Scriptures point to this every abiding truth.

"I am the way, the truth and the life; No one comes to the Father except through me."

John 14:6

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Acts 4:12

We cannot bypass the cross to get the crown. This is God's "**inflexible condition.**" People continue to attack God's demand upon their lives. Some people say that the Bible is close minded. Christians have been accused of promoting a gospel that excludes other groups and beliefs. We live in a world that believes in "live and let live."

They are essentially attacking the credibility of God's Word.

"Perhaps it was a mistake."

Genesis 43:12

It is when we surrender to God's "inflexible conditions" that our lives begin to move ahead. Haste does not make waste when we hurry to do God's will (Genesis 43:15). As soon as Joseph noticed their obedience he prepared to bless them. It took faith to carry out Joseph's command. God sends forth His servants (angels - Hebrews 1:14) to serve those who are of the household of faith.

Wasn't their reaction much like ours when God is working His will out in our lives?

"Now the men were frightened when they were taken to Joseph's house."

Genesis 43:18

We need to examine our fears. Often we jump to the wrong conclusions because of our fears. People do things that are never required of them because of fear. Some people have not become a Christian because of what they fear God will expect of them. Joseph only wanted one thing - Benjamin!

People do strange things in an attempt to receive the blessing of God (ie - pilgrimages, kiss statues, asceticism etc.). Martin Luther was set free when he discovered what faith really was.

People often believe that God is trying to get them in “His house” to punish them (Genesis 43:18b). They come with all kind of excuses to avoid it. We must realize that God does not receive satisfaction in punishing people (II Peter 3:9).

*"Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?
declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not
pleased when they turn from their ways and live?"*

Ezekiel 18:23

I've seen some people who become very fearful when God pours out His blessing upon them. Their guilty conscious tells them they don't deserve it and that a trap is being formed. It is during this time that we need words and actions of encouragement

*"It's all right, '(Peace be to you - KJV) he said,
'Don't be afraid. Your God, the God of your father,
has given you treasure in your sacks; I received
your silver.'"*

Genesis 43:23

This is not exactly the answer you would expect from an Egyptian steward (slave). God doesn't stop with just words of blessing when we obey Him. Water was provided to wash their feet as well as fodder for their donkeys (Genesis 43:24). **All was made ready for Joseph to appear before them.**

Why was all this happening? It was because God was preparing them to receive a further blessing. The blessing was made possible because of Joseph's total forgiveness of their sinful acts toward him. They were treated with dignity by one whom they had despised. What a beautiful picture of Jesus!

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 43:26-34

OUR LORD'S CARE FOR HIS OWN

This lesson proves how much God loves us. Lets be encouraged by looking at these verses through heaven's perspective. God's Word has revealed to us our new position in Christ (Ephesians 2:6) but we tend to forget what we don't see in the natural. The old adage seems to apply, "*Out of sight - out of mind.*"

The story opens with Joseph being met by his eleven brothers. Their action of bowing down must have brought back the promise God had given Joseph in his dreams (Genesis 43:26,28 cf. 37:5-8). Here is a picture of our conversion to Jesus. We must all humble ourselves before the Lord before He will lift us up. Even the brother of Jesus had to learn this lesson.

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

James 4:10

We must all approach the Lord on the same level. It is through repentance that our hearts open up to receive our Lord. Once we admit through our actions that we were wrong, we are prepared to receive our Lord's blessings.

Joseph waited 22 years for his dreams to come true. We need to be encouraged by the fact that God always keeps His Word.

"God said it; I believe it; that settles it"

1. We Quickly See How Joseph Was Interested in Their Personal Affairs.

Joseph asked about their welfare before asking of their father's well-being.

*"He asked them how they were, and then he said,
'How is your aged father you told me about? Is he
still living?'"*

Genesis 43:27

God in the same way is interested in lives. He is concerned about our financial affairs, our physical problems and our emotional concerns. He also cares about our material blessings. The way He created this world proves this over and over again.

2. God Is Secondly Concerned with the Welfare of Our Families.

We must all realize that God is more interested in our families than we often are. We are never off of His mind. He is both the creator and the One who sustains families.

Joseph took more discipline to refrain from identifying himself than his brothers did to act properly in his presence. He cared so much for them that he was willing to keep his identity hidden from them until the appointed time. Our Lord has also not shown Himself in His fulness to us before the day of His appearing.

"Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."

Romans 8:23

"Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling. (with our house which is from heaven - KJV)"

II Corinthians 5:2

Joseph was able to study their very actions and words without them knowing that he was amongst them. Even though they never addressed their needs to him, he knew what they needed. Again he symbolizes our Lord.

3. The Third Part of the Family That Interested Joseph Was Benjamin (43:29)

This last born son had the distinct position of being Joseph's only full brother. Here again is a picture of our relationship with Christ. Everyone born into this world is like an offspring of God. But those who are reborn become a "complete or full brother" with Christ. He is our elder brother.

*"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.
17. Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his suffering in order that we may also share in his glory."*

Romans 8:16,17

3. The Third Part of the Family That Interested Joseph Was Benjamin (43:29) (Contd.)

Can you sense the intensity that Joseph must have had to want to show himself to his brother, Benjamin? Our Lord has also bound Himself to certain laws, principles and time lines. In the meantime we must be willing to accept what He gives us in response to His love for us.

a. He Gave Benjamin His Word

"God be gracious to you, my son."

Genesis 43:29

We have also been given the gracious Word of God to sustain us until our Lord reveals Himself to us in His fulness. God's tender words of compassion have been given to encourage us in a world that continually drains us spiritually.

b. He Gave Benjamin His Heart

"Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there."

Genesis 43:30

Our Lord is also touched with the feelings of our weaknesses (infirmities) (Hebrews 4:15). There is a "deep move within His heart" toward us. He realizes that once He reveals Himself many past problems will be openly forgiven. We are already forgiven but often we find it hard to believe. When Jesus appears, there will be no doubt.

*"Standing somewhere in the shadows you'll find Jesus
He's a friend who always cares and understands
Standing somewhere in the shadows you will find Him
And you'll know Him by the nail prints in His hand."*

Our Lord is limiting Himself to His private chambers (heaven) when it comes to His physical appearing to us. He may hide His face but never His heart from us.

3. The Third Part of the Family That Interested Joseph Was Benjamin (43:29) (Contd.)

c. He Gave Benjamin His Hand

When we appear before our Lord some day, we will also be served a meal (Revelation 19:9). The veil is pulled back just for a moment to give us a glimpse of what God has planned for us. This is NOT a perfect symbol of the fulfilment of our Lord's final appearing because Joseph did not make himself known to his brothers.

"After he had washed his face, he came out and, controlling himself, said, 'Serve the food.'"

Genesis 43:31

We are also not yet receiving the "full meal deal." But even heaven's "lunches" appear like banquets to those who are in need of spiritual food.

Another indication that this is not symbolic of our Lord's final appearing is that there was still a division between Joseph and brothers (Genesis 43:32). They were living at a time when the Egyptians found fellowship with them as detestable (Genesis 43:32).

Also we see the order that they were served. The first born was seated first. The last born was seated last. There is a day coming where the first will be last and the last shall be first (Luke 13:30).

God brings encouragement to His people by giving a greater blessing to the last one - the full brother. The number 5 is the number of God's grace to us. It became Benjamin's portion. Benjamin never did a thing to merit this abundant blessing.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves."

Ephesians 2:8

What a beautiful chapter that displays God's care for those He loves.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 44:1-13

FORGIVING OURSELVES

At first glance it appears that Joseph was playing a very nasty game with his brothers. He had not yet revealed who he was to them. It was like he had them dangling on the end of a stick.

The wonderful meal had finished and Joseph's brothers were preparing to return home, hopefully without incident. The brothers had no idea that Joseph had commanded the steward of the house to,

"Fill the men's sacks with as much food as they can carry, and put each man's silver in the mouth of his sack."

Genesis 44:1

That would cause enough concern in itself. Yet Joseph went one step further. This step had a major purpose which can be missed if we look through the wrong glasses.

"Then put my cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest one's sack, along with the silver for his grain."

Genesis 44:2

Benjamin was the second son born to Rachel. Joseph was not sure how his brothers felt toward his full-brother. Would they sell Benjamin into slavery as well because of who he was and what it would appear that he had done?

At the break of day the brothers set out on their return journey to Canaan. They were quickly overtaken by the steward who appeared very upset, blaming them of something he knew was not true. He was told what to say by Joseph.

"Why have you repaid good with evil? . . . This is a wicked thing you have done."

Genesis 44:4,5

The ten brothers were distressed over such an accusation. They knew the power that was invested in Joseph. Why would Joseph do such a thing? Was he trying to vindicate himself?

Joseph was actually doing a very loving act to his brothers. This act brought more pain to Joseph than it probably did to his brothers. It was not easy to place his brothers in such a difficult situation. Here again Joseph is portrayed as a type of Christ. **Jesus brought pain upon Himself for our benefit.**

Joseph had the silver coins and the silver cup placed in Benjamin's sack for a special reason. **He was allowing them to see the depth and sincerity of their previous repentance.** There is no doubt that they had to deal with their sin earlier in time (Genesis 42:21). They had asked forgiveness from God for their sin against Joseph. **Now they had to forgive themselves.** These events set the stage for that to happen.

There are two kinds of repentance. One is when a person is sorry because they are caught. The second kind is when we truly seek for forgiveness based upon a change of thought and action.

Joseph gave them an opportunity to do away with Benjamin. Joseph would know by how they reacted to this opportunity whether or not real repentance had taken place. **Joseph was actually doing the most loving thing he could do.**

Joseph did not need to act in such a manner as this if he wanted to punish them for their sin against him. He had all the power of Egypt invested in his word. There was nothing that he could not have in life.

Have you ever wondered if you have really changed from your past ways? Has it ever occurred to you that you might repeat a past sin if the opportunity lent itself? Many Christians walk around with a tremendous weight of guilt for something they've done in the past. Even though they know God has forgiven them, they find it so difficult to forgive themselves. It can cause us to react in ways which we would not normally.

"If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die; and the rest of us will become my lord's slaves."

Genesis 44:9

Have you ever been extremely hard on yourself because of a past mistake? Have you gone overboard in placing punishment upon yourself? **The kindest thing that could ever happen is to discover that you wouldn't do it again.**

We are often very hard upon ourselves because we feel that we are very vulnerable in areas we've once failed in. People need to be convinced that they will never repeat what they have done. Life cannot really become abundant until that takes place. There is a big difference between just living and having an abundant life.

Joseph could recognize that his brothers had only repressed their guilt. The guilt had not been removed. An opportunity was given so they could forgive themselves and recognize the change that had taken place in their hearts.

The steward played along with Joseph's "set up."

*"Very well, then, he said, 'let it be as you say.
Whoever is found to have it will become my slave;
the rest of you will be free from blame.'"*

Genesis 44:10

A casual glance between vss 9 & 10 shows that the steward did not agree with the punishment the brothers had appointed for themselves.

You can just picture the scene as it unfolds. Each brother sighing with relief as their sacks were found "clean." The search went from the oldest to the youngest.

"And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack"

Genesis 44:12

Here was the time to test their heart. Would they sell out Benjamin like they did for Joseph? Would they begin to cast blame upon him for something that appeared to be a cut and dry case? Would they dare go back to Joseph to plea for mercy?

God allowed them to be placed in this situation to show them something. We can't change our past actions. What's done is done. It really doesn't help to say, *"If I had my life to live over again, I wouldn't make the same mistakes."* These become futile statements. The past must be left in the past. Even the blood of Jesus doesn't change what has taken place in the past. The blood of Jesus forgives sin but doesn't remove its fact from the pages of history. It just removes it from the possibility of being judged when we stand before God.

God has often allowed people a second chance by presenting a similar situation. This can be the greatest point of discovery in our new life. These moments often come disguised.

Did they pass the test?

They tore their clothes in an expression of deep regret for what was taking place (Genesis 44:13). But this in and of itself was not enough. Thank God they didn't stop with simply an outward act of remorse like that of Judas (Matthew 27:1-5).

Something more significant took place.

". . . Then they all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city."

Genesis 44:13b

As they made their approach back into the city, Joseph was able to witness the change in their heart. They were willing to be completely unified in their exposure to Joseph. They were surrendering to his mercy.

Joseph was allowing them to see the change in themselves. This would set the foundation to assure them that they were truly forgiven by Joseph in the days to follow. They would then be able to accept his future words,

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

Genesis 50:20

Joseph was not so much making them relive their past as much as he was preparing them for an abundant future.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 44:14-34

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

The ten brothers returned to Joseph as changed men. They returned with no bargaining power and swept free of self-righteousness. They showed the signs of true repentance.

1. **They treated the one they sinned against with deep respect (Genesis 44:14)**
2. **They admitted their sin (Genesis 44:16)**
3. **They submitted themselves as servants to the one they sinned against (Genesis 44:16)**

Judah again spoke on behalf of his brothers, this time to Joseph (cf. Genesis 43:3-10). Here we have a display of intercession being portrayed by means of the grace of God through a forgiven man. A prayer of intercession has often preceded an outpouring of the grace of God.

Jesus prayed all night before selecting His disciples; the Day of Pentecost took on a new meaning after 10 days of intercession; Peter was miraculously released from prison (Acts 4:31) because the church met and prayed "*without ceasing*" for his release. God's mighty acts tend to follow times of great intercessory prayer.

Intercessory prayer is not something which is spoken of very often. It is the kind of prayer that happens when we step beyond the gap between a **hidden God** and a **helpless man**. It is using the power of heaven to change a situation for the good. It is like taking on the heartbeat of God for a period of time (Hebrews 7:25).

There Are 8 Principles for Intercessory Prayer Which Are Shown in Our Text

1. We must Recognize That We Are Not Worthy in and of Ourselves (Genesis 44:16)

Judah made it very clear that he was not standing before Joseph based upon his worthiness. We also must cry out "*What can we say?*" Our prayers are not heard because of a worthiness on our part - it is because we are surrendering to One who is worthy. It is really He Who becomes the Intercessor of our intercessory prayer. Joseph stands as a type of Christ once again.

2. We must Acknowledge Our Servitude to God (Genesis 44:16b)

One who has given him or herself to intercessory prayer must also recognize that he or she is the Lord's bond slave. This person becomes totally resigned to the Lord's sovereign will in everything that he says, thinks and does.

Nothing is done without a careful recognition that God is our Master "*We are now my lord's slaves.*"

3. We must Be Persistent until the Answer Comes (Genesis 44:17-18)

Joseph initially appeared to be totally uninterested with Judah's opening statements. Joseph's act caused Judah's intercession to increase. Those who are called into a time of intercession must realize the vital importance of "praying through." Nothing will come as important than the need before a true intercessor. Just like Jacob did earlier in his life we must also say,

"I will not let you go unless you bless me."

Genesis 32:26

Jesus also taught on the importance of persistency in prayer. The friend in Jesus' story gave into the request for bread,

"because of the man's boldness (or persistence) he will get up and give him as much as he needs."

Luke 11:8

4. We must Acknowledge the Sovereign Authority of God to Do What He Pleases - and Always Be Right (Genesis 44:18)

Judah acknowledged that Joseph was equal to Pharaoh himself because Pharaoh had invested his supreme authority into Joseph whom he trusted. That, of course, meant that Joseph had supreme power over the decisions he made. The Pharaoh had placed him in a position of unbelievable trust. Joseph's wisdom was never questioned. His word was final.

"Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him."

Psalms 115:3

5. We must Remind God of Certain Facts (Genesis 44:19-29)

We do not remind God of things because He has forgotten.

"Do not be like them (babbling in prayer) for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

Matthew 6:8

We simply mention these things to reinforce the truth that we know that He knows all things and we have also not forgotten. Some people think that it is foolish to remind God about something He already knows. Yet this is the way effectual fervent prayer works.

Moses used this principle when he interceded for the lives of his rebellious nation that was worshipping the golden calf (Exodus 32:7-14). The early church also reminded God of His past acts before making their request of intercession (Acts 4:23-31).

6. We must Rid Our Hearts of All Resentment (Genesis 44:30)

Judah's plea proved that they had come to terms with the bitterness that formed because of their father's partiality to Joseph. Twenty two years had only transferred the affection to Benjamin.

Have you ever tried to get a person to see the wrong of their ways and they just don't seem to change even after you approach them on the matter? **We may not be able to change others but we can change our attitude toward them and hope that our change will eventually bring about a change in them.**

Bitterness cannot remain if intercession is to succeed.

"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

Mark 11:25

7. We must Seek to Move the Very Heart of God (Genesis 44:31)

It is not our ability to speak in Oxford English that moves the heart of God. It is when we choose to move into the realm of simple childlike prayer that God's heart is moved. It is when our children try to manipulate us that we often turn a deaf ear to them. A prayer of **total helplessness** is more moving than a prayer of **self-confidence**. Never reach for the devil's tail until your other hand has secured Jesus' heart.

8. We must Be Devoid of Any Selfish Concern (Genesis 44:33)

Judah was more concerned for the welfare of Benjamin than even for his own life.

*"I speak the truth in Christ - I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit
2. I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.
3. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race."*

Romans 9:1-3

Judah portrayed the heart of God also in this case.

"Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy."

Genesis 44:33

Being an intercessor is often standing in the gap of a pending threat and placing your own life on the line. The preeminent desire of our actions should always be to bring glory to God.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 44:33-34

INTERCESSORY PRAYER (Part II)

God chooses to bind Himself to certain conditions that precipitate intercessory prayer. God does not need us to be involved but He chooses to give us the privilege to serve in prayer on His behalf for our good. He voluntarily binds Himself to work along with us. This means a change of pace for God but He sees the value of waiting for us.

God brings about conditions that cause us to enter times of intercessory prayer in order to give us a taste of His love. Intercessory prayer is not usually for us but for another person or situation. It causes us to become very involved - emotionally involved.

An intercessor often speaks of feeling the hurts of others. The early church prayed for Peter while he was unjustly thrown into prison. Peter needed the church and the church needed Peter. The church felt the hurt that Peter was experiencing. Prayer went on without ceasing for Peter (Acts 12:1-19).

Those who have truly entered the realm of intercessory prayer come to an understanding of the heartbeat of God. Jesus was willing to suffer for each and every one of us. He didn't die upon the cross for Himself. He lived a life that was sinless. He died in order to bear our sins upon Himself on the rugged cross.

Intercessory prayer brings us face to face with what often appears to be a hidden God. Everything appeared to indicate that Judah's plea for Benjamin was in vain. Joseph's thoughts were totally hidden from Judah. This is the way intercessory prayer often works. We feel like we are coming face to face before a hidden God.

True intercessors are eventually lifted up into a place that they boldly request for things to someone who owes them nothing.

"Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers."

Genesis 44:33

To Better Understand Intercessory Prayer We Need to Know the Ingredients of this Type of Prayer

1. Intercessors Carry a Burden

Some have thought they've carried a burden but as time progressed it proved to be the opposite. All intercessors will carry a heavy burden for others. This is probably why there are so few intercessors. Most of us have enough burdens/problems of our own. We don't need any more weight to carry.

Intercessors become able to step into situations that leave them totally vulnerable to have to carry a burden that could, if they allowed it to, overwhelm them. They become willing, like Judah, to enter an ordeal that could leave them rejected.

We usually keep our prayers to those areas that we think are reachable. This is a way of keeping from being disappointed. We don't want to think that we are praying in vain. Intercessors are willing to carry a burden for the sake of another.

2. Intercessors Become Vulnerable

Intercessors must be willing to put their deepest feelings on the line. There are many opportunities for our faith to be challenged. An intercessor lifts this potential to extremes. They will become vulnerable even for their very lives.

*"How can I go back to my father if the boy is not
with me?"*

Genesis 44:34

Judah was willing to lay his very life on the line for the sake of Benjamin. We mustn't forget that he was addressing the second in command of all the world. Intercessory prayer strangely works best when it is matter of life and death. There is no playing games. The cry of our hearts is revealed. We will become totally vulnerable.

3. Intercessors Are Willing to Become Expendable

Intercessors can honestly say, "I could wish myself accursed." Judah was willing to never see Benjamin again. He was willing to be taken into captivity in the place of Benjamin. Most slaves would eventually be mistreated and probably die.

Joseph gave no indication to this point who he was. He allowed Judah to make his plea without interrupting him. Likewise, God often hides His face from us until the very last moment. It causes our prayers to be more intense. Are we willing to offer life for someone else?

3. Intercessors Are Willing to Become Expendable (Contd.)

Jesus offered us His example almost 2,000 years ago. He was willing to be expendable for us before we were even born. He was willing to lay His life down for everyone. He put His Father's will before His very own. Judah carried His heart beat as well for the sake of his father.

"Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father."

Genesis 44:34b

Judah was more concerned about his father than he was even about his own life. He couldn't stand to see any further bad news come to the ear of his father. He was willing to go the third mile to prevent further misery from taking place. What a picture of Jesus as our Intercessor.

The Bible has given us much encouragement to keep going when the burdens of life become great.

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Galatians 6:9

*"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
30. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

Matthew 11:28,29

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 45:1-11

TOTAL FORGIVENESS

Joseph had a twofold task. He had to first prove that he was really Joseph. Second, he had to show his brothers that he had totally forgiven them for selling him into slavery 22 years earlier. Joseph again symbolizes Jesus who had the same twofold task.

One of the greatest weapons that the devil uses is to try to convince us that Jesus was never the Son of God. It is acceptable that He is believed to be a prophet, a teacher, a worker of miracles, but not that He is God. One of the greatest truths in the Bible is that Jesus is the Son of God (Matthew 27:54; I Corinthians 12:3).

Once we believe that Jesus is the Son of God it makes it much easier to believe that He is able and willing to totally forgive us of our sins.

We seem to initially respond to Jesus the same as Joseph's brothers did.

"they were terrified (troubled - KJV) at his presence."

Genesis 45:3

To grasp the truth that the one they had sinned against was truly alive and that he wanted to totally forgive them was a bit unbelievable at first.

Judah had requested that his brother Benjamin be able to return to his father Jacob. Judah had NOT understood what he really needed - TOTAL FORGIVENESS.

Are we like Judah trying to bargain with God and yet not fully seeing our real need - the need to be totally forgiven from our sins? We often tend to deny concentrating on what we really want because it seems so out of reach.

This is a picture of our conversion. It is receiving more than we ever dreamed about. Our eyes become opened to the truth that we are fully forgiven and that what has happened in our life was really part of God's sovereign plan for us. It almost seems too good to be true.

**There Are at Least Five Principles That Are Highlighted
in These Verses Dealing with Total Forgiveness**

**1. Total Forgiveness Is Demonstrated When We Are Willing to Cover the Past
(Genesis 45:1)**

Joseph did not want anyone else to know what his brothers had done to him 22 years before. Joseph made himself known to his brothers in the secret of **their company only**. This was a very unusual act for anyone in his position due to safety factors.

Joseph wanted his family to come and live in a new land and have a new start on life. He is the demonstration of the kind of love that covers a multitude of sins. Unforgiveness wants to let everyone know how we've been mistreated in the past. Total forgiveness protects the ones we love. This is the message of the gospel portrayed on the pages of Scripture. It is the demonstration of our Lord's forgiveness (Hebrews 8:10-12).

2. Total Forgiveness Wants to Make a Person Feel Completely at Ease (Genesis 45:3-4)

Joseph knew he had to do something about the fear that was gripping his brothers. He invited his brothers to come close to him. Distance has its way of portraying a message. He wanted them to clearly see the expressions on his face. His eyes would tell them a million stories.

Unforgiveness works in just the opposite manner. Unforgiveness tends to make people feel uncomfortable. It makes people squirm. It makes people "pay" for what they've done.

**3. Total Forgiveness Will Not Allow a Person to Feel Bad or Angry with Himself
(Genesis 45:5)**

It would have been very easy for Joseph to pour guilt and shame upon his brothers. Joseph was very sensitive to what his brothers were feeling. It is so easy to live in our past and hang onto the hurts that others have placed upon us.

4. Total Forgiveness Makes it Easy for People to Forgive Themselves (Genesis 45:6-8)

Forgiveness allows us to view the difficulties of life through a positive perspective. We can look at problems through many different angles.

Verse 8 gives us the most revered statement in the whole story of Joseph. He was willing to see the hand of God in ALL that took place.

4. Total Forgiveness Makes it Easy for People to Forgive Themselves (Genesis 45:6-

8) (Contd.)

The principle of Romans 8:28 is set into motion.

5. Total Forgiveness Keeps Sin Hidden from the One Who it Will Hurt the Most (Genesis 45:9)

They probably were able to gain a new sense of dignity, and worth in order to cope with their future. Joseph was willing to keep the sin of their past hidden from their father (the one who would hurt the most because of the news). Joseph refused to pour salt into their wounds. Instead, he poured in the oil and the wine - the kind that would restore their soul.

Isn't this just like Jesus?

"as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

Psalms 103:12

There Were 3 Promises Given to the Brothers If They Obeyed What Joseph Asked**1. Joseph's Protection (Genesis 45:10)**

They were given the blessing of living in the land of Goshen. This meant they would be able to live their lives separated from the Egyptians. They would be in the world (Egypt) but not of the world. This would give them the liberty they would need to practise their own religion and customs. Goshen was a very fertile land which was important in raising sheep, etc.

This protective security was also extended to their entire families.

2. Joseph's Presence (Genesis 45:10)

Joseph would be near them. No one would dare do anything to them with the blessing of Pharaoh and Joseph upon them. Joseph went one step further. He was not just willing to be near them. He associated with them. They could sense his presence. Is this not also a picture of God?

3. Joseph's Provision (Genesis 45:11)

Where God guides - He provides. Joseph knew that there were still five more years of famine. His family would continue to run out of food and supplies without returning to Egypt. Once they obeyed and moved to Goshen their concerns would be quenched. Isn't this just like Jesus (Philippians 4:19).

If they did not obey what Joseph said they would perish (Genesis 45:11). God has a way to provide for His people during times of famine. He has sent someone ahead to prepare for our future. Trust Him.

Trust and Obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, But to Trust and Obey

J. H. Sammis

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 45:12-28

LOST HOPE REVIVED

This chapter turns our focus away from Joseph and toward his father, Jacob. Joseph's brothers are sent back to Canaan with the good news. They were to bring back their father this time. There was still going to be five (the number of grace) more years of famine in the land. Egypt was the only place where they could survive.

It was not an easy task to convince Jacob to leave his homeland and go to live the rest of his life in Egypt. Their father had previously been convinced that he would go to his grave in a state of mourning (Genesis 37:35; 44:29)

The brothers had to tell their father not only that Joseph was alive but that he was the governor of Egypt.

This is a picture of our conversion. The first thing that happens is that we are brought a message of the salvation of Jesus Christ. It changes our lives once we believe the message.

It comes about as we admit that we have been wrong and we confess that Jesus Christ is alive and that He has an abundant gift to give us. Someone must tell us (Romans 10:14) and we must believe the message.

Can you imagine more startling news than this for Jacob to receive - and especially from his own sons? His sons who delivered the message were now "forgiven men." If anyone was ever unworthy to take such good news to their father - it was these sons. What right had they to bear such wonderful news? Yet what right have we to bear the good news of the cross of Jesus to a hurting world? It is only because we have been forgiven that we can spread the good news.

1. We Need to Lovingly Carry the Message

Joseph ordered his brothers to be loving to each other.

"Don't quarrel on the way."

Genesis 45:24

If we are to be effective in sharing the good news, we need to do our best to stay away from quarrelling with one another. If we are divided, we will fall. Every nation, empire, city and home divided against itself will eventually fall.

2. The Grace of God Revives Forgotten Hopes

God's grace brings back to our memory things we had forgotten about. The Holy Spirit knows what to bring back into our memory (John 14:26). It is God's grace that brings us to truth instead of assumptions.

Have you ever given up hope that God would speak to you in a specific area of your life? Have you been living on assumptions which you can definitely see as not being true? Could it be that you came to a hasty conclusion based upon inadequate evidence which has greatly affected your life? Did it whip you into a time of depression from which you have not as of yet recovered from? Perhaps you've given up hope that God will ever rescue you from your hurts?

You may have come to the conclusion that only certain parts of the Bible can be trusted as truth. It has caused you to live under a cloud. If only something could happen to bring the reality of God's Word to your life, you know you would be set on fire. Can you admit that you have allowed inconclusive evidence to convince you in assuming that something was wrong?

Perhaps it is in the area of unanswered prayer. Have you stopped praying about something? Today God could answer your prayer.

What plan have you envisioned for yourself that you may have given up on even though you once thought it was God's will?

For 22 years Jacob had been convinced that his son, Joseph, was dead. His 10 sons had returned with Joseph's coat asking their father to examine it to see whether it belonged to Joseph or not. It was the father who drew the wrong conclusions based upon their deception.

"It is my son's robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces."

Genesis 37:33

That was his conclusion. No one could have told him he was wrong. He had seen the coat. There was blood all over it. The evidence became conclusive to this grieving father. His 10 sons remained silent and therefore were deceptive about the truth. Look at what happened when Jacob was faced with the truth!

"Jacob was stunned (fainted - KJV); he did not believe them."

Genesis 45:26b

I guess we would agree that this was a natural reaction to such overwhelming news. They had touched the most sensitive nerve in the body of Jacob - that which connected to his son.

How do you think you would react if the most sensitive thing in your life were touched upon and you realized that you have been living under a wrong assumption for many years? What do you suppose that Jacob would want to believe more than anything in this world?

We usually keep our dreams within the realm of at least the remotest possibility. Perhaps God wants us to think about the impossibilities.

"Now unto him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine (think - KJV), according to his power that is at work within us,"

Ephesians 3:20

I wonder how many Christians began their walk in Christ believing in the Bible and then met with some sceptic who turned them from the truth. Now they only believe what makes sense to them. In doing so it has left a deep hurt in their soul. A hurt so real that it feels that it can never be mended.

It is very clear from Scripture that the devil will take advantage of our listening to inconclusive evidence. He will have a field day as he drives us into all kinds of despair, confusion, and sorrow.

If we ever did a character study on Jacob, we could easily see the places that the devil could have found a foothold in his life. He could easily blame Jacob for stealing his brother's birthright and deceiving his aging father. He had become a deceiver to overcome his father-in-law. He could have easily believed that God was punishing him for his deceiving past.

None of us like to admit that we've been living under a false assumption. Jacob had wasted 22 years of his life in a state of unnecessary sorrow. This problem often keeps people from becoming a Christian or turning from their back slidden state.

Jacob had to accept that Joseph was alive BEFORE he would have the chance to see him. He also had to believe that he was given the right to control and oversee all the affairs of the world. This is much like the gospel message.

"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

Hebrews 11:6

It was not easy for the brothers to tell their father the whole truth. But that is what it took to convince him.

"But when they had told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived.

28. And Israel said, "I'm convinced! My son Joseph is alive. I will go and see him before I die."

Genesis 45:27,28

This was the most difficult moment for Joseph's brothers. They confessed their sin to their father. Joseph had gone through great pains in order to protect them. He would not allow the Egyptians to hear about it. He never requested that they tell their father of their past deception. But they elected to tell Jacob. **It was a needed confession on their part.**

It also brought Jacob to the place that Joseph's prophetic dreams were to become true. God had loved Joseph enough to use him to save many. Is this not the gospel message as well? Although we may never fully understand God's plan, we can see His hand at work once we are confronted by the truth.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis 46:1-7

ACCEPTING THE NEW AND DIFFERENT

Jacob was confronted with many changes in a short period of time. He was being asked to do something directly against what appeared as normal to him. **He was to leave Canaan to go to Egypt.**

It was wrong for Abraham to go to Egypt and he got in much trouble for it. God spoke directly to Isaac about the issue.

"The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, 'Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live.'"

Genesis 26:2

Yet God had a different path for Jacob to walk. We all must be very sensitive to God's leading. It is wrong for us to interfere with someone who has decided to follow God's leading. It could lead that person into many problems and even sin.

It was also very difficult for someone of his age to accept such an abrupt change. God had to prepare Jacob for the change in the following ways.

1. God Makes the New and Different an Attractive Alternative to the Bleak and Dismal past

Joseph sent the good news that he was alive as well as some carts to bring back get their wives, children and father.

"Never mind about your belongings, because the best of Egypt will be yours."

Genesis 45:20

He was about to have an "Extreme Makover."

2. God Restored the Kind of Communion Jacob Had Once Known

*"he offered sacrifices to the God of his father
Isaac."*

Genesis 46:1b

There is no indication that Jacob had communion with God since Bethel and Paddan Aram (Genesis 35:1-13).

Certain Principles Seem to Come to Life When God Wants Us to Accept the New and Different

1. God Leaves Us with No Viable Alternative

There are many things in life that we would never do if God had not narrowed our choices. The Lord can place us into situations that leave us no alternatives.

*"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy
power."*

Psalms 110:3 KJV

"He doesn't compel us to go against our will; he just makes us willing to go."

2. God Helps Us Sort Ourselves out Before the Change

For 22 years Jacob had believed that Joseph was dead. Sometimes we live under a cloud because we believe something which is not true.

Once he saw the wagons and realized that the words of his sons were true he made the necessary changes in his mind and heart to accept the change.

3. God Helped Jacob Act Upon His new Acceptance

*"And Israel said, 'I am convinced! My son Joseph is
still alive. I will go and see him before I die.'
1. So Israel set out with all that was his . . ."*

Genesis 45:28; 46:1

3. God Helped Jacob Act Upon His new Acceptance (Contd.)

How Was it That God Helped Jacob to Accept the Change and Act upon It?

a. There Was an Undoubted Continuity with the Past

God is not always the initiator of change. Therefore, we need to see His pattern. God leads us from A to B and then from B to C. Each step has a link with the previous one (Genesis 28:10).

*"and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, 'Jacob!, Jacob! 'Here I am,' he replied
3. I am God, the God of your father, . . ."*

Genesis 46:1b-3a

Beersheba was a place that both Abraham (Genesis 21:33) and Isaac (Genesis 26:23-25) met with God.

b. There Was an Undoubted Break from the Past

"So Israel set out with all that was his . . ."

Genesis 46:1a

Jacob knew he was never coming back to Canaan alive. Even though the famine was only to last another five years (Genesis 45:6), he had to leave what he had in Canaan. We will never look forward to the new and different until there is an utter abandonment with our past. There must be nothing left to turn back to.

4. God Always Acts Upon His Word

*"Then the LORD said to him, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated **four hundred years,**
14 But I will punish the nation they will serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions . . .
16. In the **forth generation** your descendants will come back here.*

Genesis 15:13,14,16

LESSON 27

According to Jewish custom a "generation" was the age of a man when his first son was born. Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac (Genesis 21:5 the son of promise) was born. It would therefore take 400 years to fulfill the promise.

"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised."

Genesis 28:15

"I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes."

*Genesis 46:4
cf. Genesis 50:25;
Exodus 12:40; 13:19*

The task of every Christian is to be sensitive to the voice of God, who is often leading us into new and different things and places. It was a tremendous step of obedience for Jacob to take when he was set in his ways and most vulnerable in his later years.

God gave him and will also give us assurance when He is wanting us to accept the new and the different. Not everything that is new and different is from God. Be sensitive to hear His voice and walk in that way.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH**Genesis 46:8-34****I AM NOT ASHAMED**

The brothers of Joseph stand not so much as unsung heroes but rather as trophies of divine grace. They were willing to remain non vindicated and yet harbour no bitterness against their brother who had been vindicated. They swallowed their pride and were willing to live under the shadow of Joseph in Egypt.

There were many reasons why they were willing to make such an incredible transition in their lives. **First**, was because they had repented of their sins. **Second**, they received total forgiveness from Joseph and God. **Third**, they forgave themselves. The **fourth** reason is one I wish to discuss in this lesson, was because Joseph was not ashamed of them.

Shame can and does put chains of bondage around people. We must be very careful not to place shame on others. Don't say "shame ON you" but rather "shame OFF you."

We need to portray the example of Jesus toward those who have unjustly treated us.

"Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers."

Hebrews 2:11

Joseph demonstrated the truth of this verse in graphic display for the whole world to see. What a powerful example of the heart of God toward us.

1. Joseph Was Not Ashamed to Move Quickly upon What He Believed (Genesis 45:8-13)

Joseph didn't want them to delay their move into Egypt (Genesis 45:9,13). There is a time to wait on the Lord for direction and there is a time to move upon what He has clearly directed us to do.

There are times when the answers to our prayers are hindered simply because we linger. Many times throughout Scripture God told the children of Israel to do something (and do it now).

2. Joseph Was Not Ashamed to Show His Feelings (Genesis 45:14,15)

One of the sweet and tender things about Jesus was that He also was willing to show His feelings to us. He did not hide behind an image. Jesus was utterly free and void of fear to express His true feelings before the people He loved. When Jesus came to the tomb of Lazarus, He wept (John 11:35). Today He continues to show His feelings before the Father.

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses . . ."

Hebrews 4:15

When Joseph's entire family arrived in Egypt, he openly displayed his deep love for his father.

"As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time."

Genesis 45:29b

3. Joseph Was Not Ashamed by Promising to Intercede for Them (Genesis 45:31-32; 46:1,2)

To stand before Joseph was one thing, but to stand before Pharaoh was something totally different. It was here that Joseph really began to place his whole future on the line. It is interesting that Joseph chose five brothers to present to Pharaoh. Five is the number of God's grace in the Bible.

In the same way Jesus is not ashamed to stand before the Father and declare that we are His family. This proclaims that we are saved through faith by His grace (Ephesians 2:8,9).

4. Joseph Was Not Ashamed of Their Occupation (Genesis 46:33-34; 46:3)

A shepherd was considered an abomination to every Egyptian. It was the worst job a person could be given. A shepherd was immediately looked down upon in Egypt. It is interesting that Moses (a shepherd) was used to finally deliver the people from Egyptian bondage.

Jesus was also willing to be described as our Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20; I Peter 2:25; John 10). There were two main duties of every shepherd. They were first to lead their flocks to water and food and secondly to protect them from all predators.

It was because they were willing to admit they were shepherds that they were given a rich land and a region isolated from the Egyptians. It's important not to be ashamed of what we believe and what we are no matter whom we are standing before (Romans 1:16).

5. Joseph Was Not Ashamed to Tell the Truth (Genesis 46:34; 47:3)

Not only were his brothers instructed to tell the truth but also to tell the whole truth. It was one thing to say you are a shepherd. It was another to declare that your ancestry was also that of shepherding. This would portray them as hopeless before the Egyptians. They would become social outcasts - never to be invited to an Egyptian festival or celebration.

It is not easy to tell the whole truth. **Sometimes truth can be hidden in words.** We could say we are in the "fire insurance business" or we could say we are an evangelist.

6. Joseph Was Not Ashamed to Personally Present His Family to Pharaoh (Genesis 46:31; 47:1-11)

Joseph identified himself with his family. He personally took them before Pharaoh. Instead of receiving a word of condemnation he was greeted with a blessing. Pharaoh blessed Joseph's family and even requested that any with special ability could be in charge of his livestock.

Jesus will soon present us to His Father and be proud to do it. He will be delighted to see the blessing that will be bestowed upon us. Great will be our reward. He makes us heirs and joint-heirs of His kingdom and blessing. We will be given the best land to dwell in (heaven) with all our needs to be met (Revelation 21:1-7).

7. Joseph Was Not Ashamed to Fulfill His Father's Death Wish (Genesis 47:28-31)

After 17 years of living in the land of Goshen, Jacob realized his time of death was at hand. He called for Joseph and had him place his hand on his father's thigh (cf. Genesis 24:2); the place representing procreation and therefore dealing with future events.

Joseph was the only one who could fulfill this wish. He would fulfill a prophecy in doing so (Genesis 28:15; 46:3,4). Joseph would personally carry his father's corpse out in order to keep his word (Genesis 50:1-14)

We must not be ashamed of identifying ourselves with Jesus while we are alive in order that He will not be ashamed of us once we die.

"If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

Mark 8:38 (cf Luke 9:22)

The day of our deliverance is at hand. Which side are we on? If we ashamed of Jesus Christ and will He ashamed of us. There is no time to wait. We must know for sure TODAY!!

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH**Genesis 50:15-26****GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD**

If we have ever wondered why God exalted Joseph to the lofty position of Prime Minister of Egypt, this chapter should eliminate any doubts. He had learned to love and forgive.

One of the hardest lessons for us to learn is how to love. Of course, I'm talking about the level of love that the Scriptures speak of (agape). We have learned to love when we can totally forgive someone who has done such an awful thing to us. The temptation is always to be filled with bitterness, hatred, and a desire for revenge.

Many years had passed (39 years) since Joseph had been sold into slavery. Joseph's 10 older brothers thought that since their father Jacob was dead that Joseph would now take his revenge upon them. Look at the words of his response to them.

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

Genesis 50:20

Joseph had been given the opportunity to be very successful. There was no need to show love in order to be used by God in the future. His main task in life had been completed 10 years earlier. His father had gone on to Abraham's bosom. No one in Egypt would care if he took revenge upon his brothers.

But why would the brothers even think that he would act in such a manner? They came to him with what was probably a manufactured message. I suspect that Jacob never said what they claimed he had.

"I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly. Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father."

Genesis 50:17

They probably judged Joseph by their own standard, disclosing unwittingly how much still needed to change in their own lives.

This made another opportunity for Joseph to have to forgive them AGAIN! He could have felt unjustly judged and said, "Do you believe that I've been putting on an act for the past 17 years." **The brothers had lived under this fear for 17 years questioning whether they were totally forgiven even though Joseph had done all he could to convince them.**

We can also have difficulty accepting God's forgiveness because we live in such a way that we doubt whether others have forgiven us. It is a startling discovery for some Christians when they actually believe they are forgiven of all their past.

The brothers acknowledged what they had done. But we may have to forgive someone who refuses to acknowledge that they have done anything wrong. They are the hardest type of people to forgive. Unforgiveness will do more damage to us than the guilt that the perpetrator may face.

There Are 4 Proofs of Total Forgiveness

1. When We Don't Want the Other Person to Be Afraid of Us (Genesis 50:19)

When we have totally forgiven someone, we don't want them to be afraid of us. We can refuse to be friendly to keep another person worried about whether or not they are forgiven. We can all convey an unloving feeling. **It is a form of control to keep people afraid of us.**

The Bible shows us the danger of this kind of action.

"Fear has to do with punishment" The one who fears is not made perfect in love."

I John 4:18

When we allow such innuendos or feelings to rise up, we are really showing forth **OUR FEAR**. It is fear that keeps us from loving and forgiving others.

2. When We Refuse to Take Advantage of Any Superior Position We May Have (Genesis 50:19)

Joseph was in the position that he could have taken advantage of his brothers. Instead, he put himself in the right place with God.

"Am I in the place of God?"

Genesis 50:19

2. When We Refuse to Take Advantage of Any Superior Position We May Have (Genesis 50:19) (Contd.)

Joseph recognized that there was still God above him and that he would be held accountable for his actions.

Joseph never forced his position of authority upon his brothers. He refused to use his position to gain respect. **He rather chose to be transparent before those who needed to receive his forgiveness (just like Jesus).**

3. When We Bind up the Wound So Completely That We Can Honestly Believe That it Was Meant to Be (Genesis 50:20)

Joseph had already offered very kind words to his brothers (Genesis 45:5). We may never be able to fully comprehend the mystery that in the same manner it "pleased the Lord to bruise him" (Isaiah 53:10). Yet Jesus was willing to be the Lamb of God slain from before the foundation of the world. Nothing about the death of Jesus came by way of an accident.

"This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose (determinate counsel - KJV) and foreknowledge;"

Acts 2:23

There was no need to bring condemnation upon the soldiers or the Jews for crucifying Jesus. As terrible as the act was, the Father had to allow it in order to bring forth new life.

4. When You Keep on Forgiving Them (Genesis 50:21)

It is often very difficult to forgive someone even once. The final test of forgiveness is probably the most difficult. Joseph was willing to continue to provide for all his family and their offspring. Every provision was a message of forgiveness. Forgiveness must carry beyond the outburst of an emotional moment.

One of the very common practices in life is to watch people vent their vengeance against someone who has wronged them. But Joseph kept his sight in focus and in the right direction. His eyes were looking toward another city just like Moses for his reward (Hebrews 11:26)

"By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones."

Hebrews 11:22

Joseph's great, great, grandfather, Abraham, set a better vision for him to seek after.

"For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

Hebrews 11:10

At the time of creation, written about at the beginning of Genesis, God said it was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Over the next 49 chapters every evil thing took place under the sun. Isn't it interesting that God uses the word "good" again through the mouth of Joseph to describe the final result of a terrible series of events?

Have you ever had difficulty accepting . . . ,

"And we know that in all things God works for the good for those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Romans 8:28

Are we content to accept what God calls good even though it doesn't make sense? If so, we have reached the level of maturity that Joseph gained while walking on this earth.

So here we come to the end of an incredible life of one who often imitates the life of Christ. It offers us a wonderful example to follow in our world. There will be plenty of opportunities to grant forgiveness to those who will premeditate harm toward us.

May God grant us the same spirit of Joseph. You just never know whether your life will take you on a journey from Pit to Palace. By taking on this kind of nature we will never know how many precious souls can be saved for our Lord and Saviour.