
Opening Scripture: Genesis 41:37-57;

Republic, Sept. 22, 2024

Main Text: [Genesis 42:1-26](#);

Title: The Tough, but Inspiring, Life of Joseph, Pt. 3

Fast review of Part 2

- VI. After being promoted to head of Potiphar's household, life turns bad again, for Joseph, when he is falsely accused by his master's wife, then thrown into prison.**
- VII. While in prison, God was with Joseph, and He starts blessing him again. He becomes an overseer of the inmates.**
- VIII. Later yet, 2 of Pharaoh's servants (a cupbearer* and a baker) were thrown into the same prison as Joseph. They have dreams that Joseph interprets. Both dreams came true in 3 days. Cupbearer's position is restored, but forgets to tell Pharaoh about Joseph's gift of dream interpretation. Joseph is stuck in prison 2 more yrs.**
- IX. After 2 more years in prison, Joseph's gift of dream interpretation finally get recognized when Pharaoh has dreams he cannot figure out. Now, Joseph finally starts the journey to bigger and better things in life.** His interpretation of Pharaoh's dream that Egypt was going to have 7 years of prosperity, followed by 7 years of famine makes Pharaoh promote Joseph to 2nd in command to oversee the preparation of those years. So, now at the age of 30 Joseph has just gone through a total of 13 years of "bad, then good, bad then good, then one more bad then good." Finally, he is about to see consistently good.
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Transitional thoughts from Part 2 to prepare for Part 3

*So, this is now the **THIRD** time that Joseph has been promoted:*

1. After his brothers treated him wrong & sold him as a slave, he was promoted while serving his master, Potiphar. He became head of Potiphar's household.
2. After being falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, & then sent to jail, Joseph was promoted to be the head over the inmates.

3. After interpreting a dream for the cupbearer, but the Cupbearer not telling Pharaoh about Joseph's gift of dream interpretation, Joseph goes through 2 more years in jail. Then, he later gets his highest promotion. This time Pharaoh promotes him to 2nd in command of Egypt.

3 negative events, each one followed by promotions. 3 negatives to 3 positives.

Do you think that Joseph would have gotten promoted in ANY of these positions, if he had become a bitter person?

Do you think that by Joseph learning and growing from negative events, and his staying true to God, that this created the personal growth that God was looking for so that God would bless Joseph even more?

Joseph's life is a perfect example of what it REALLY MEANS to follow God, and to do so even when things in life are not going like we want them to.

I believe Joseph truly understood the God's words, that were later quoted in Isaiah:

Isaiah 55:9 (NIV)

⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth, **so are my ways higher than your ways** and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Do we really understand what those words mean? How they apply to our lives?

God has ideas, plans, purposes that He makes out of what we will face in life. We just keep moving on to the next chapter of our life.

Have we learned to always trust God when things don't go the way we thought they should go? Have we learned that He has a bigger and better plan for us? That His ways are higher than our ways?

Joseph's life represents how we should live when we experience difficulties. It also emphasizes why God blessed him.

----- **Part 3** -----

Today, we will pick up on our story at the time of the famine in Egypt. Remember, Joseph had interpreted the King's dream to mean that God was warning Pharaoh that there would be

7 years of prosperity, during which time Egypt needed to put food away for 7 yrs of famine.

In our story today, Egypt, and the surrounding areas, are now in those 7 years of famine.

We have to remind ourselves that not only did Joseph's brothers cause emotional hurt to Joseph, they also caused great emotional hurt to their own father.

3 Insights:

1.) Our sin effects other people.

Joseph's brothers are an example of this. Their attitudes caused great distress and hurt for Joseph. But, even more than that, their sin hurt their father.

Not only did their actions cause deep sorrow in their father, but it also deprived their father of many wonderful years with Joseph. The damage they did was very great, and could never be made up while on this earth.

2.) The greater the damage someone does to another person, and even how long the damage lasts, the harder it is to forgive.

In your own experiences, *when you think about something you didn't like about what others have done, is your case worse than Joseph's case? Worse than what Joseph's father Jacob went through?*

When you think about how the world treated Jesus in such a terrible manner, Is your case worse than Jesus' case?

3.) ALL of them forgave. All of them continued to try to keep doing right. And we are expected to do the same. But, all of them were eventually blessed.

X. During the famine years, Joseph's Dad Jacob, sent 10 of Joseph's brothers to Egypt to buy grain. Benjamin is the only brother that he did not send.

Let's look at that story, starting in Genesis chapter 42

Genesis 42:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ When Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, "Why do you look at one another?"

² And he said, "Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down to that place

and buy for us there, that we may live and not die."

³ So Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt.

Why would Jacob send 10 of his sons to Egypt? Why not only 3, or 4, sons?

One good guess is so they could bring back more grain. If Jacob had only sent 3 sons, that would have limited the amount of grain that could be hauled back.

Genesis 42:4 (NKJV)

⁴ But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "Lest some calamity befall him."

Parents go through feelings like that when they've lost a child. They tend to overly protect the other children.

Rachel died while giving birth to Benjamin. So, in this case, Benjamin was the only child left (so Jacob thought) from his greatest love, Rachel. So, he did not want to send him out where something could happen to him on the trip.

Genesis 42:5-6 (NKJV)

⁵ And the sons of Israel went to buy *grain* among those who journeyed, for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

⁶ Now Joseph *was* governor over the land; **and it was he who sold to all the people** of the land. **And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him** with *their* faces to the earth.

Two things:

1. It was Joseph who sold to all the people of the land.

Keep in mind he had helpers under his authority to do this. Chances are, his helpers handled most of it. BUT, scholars say that it is very possible that when outsiders came from another country (people not from Egypt), Joseph was directly involved in those cases, because of the risk that they were spying to see how to overthrow Egypt in order to get to the food supply. So, with that being more of a risky situation, Joseph was more involved in those cases.

2. The brothers came and bowed down before Joseph, just like the dreams Joseph had at age 17.

Genesis 42:7-8 (NKJV)

- ⁷ **Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them.** Then he said to them, "Where do you come from?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan to buy food."
- ⁸ **So Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.**

Let's look at 3 things about verses 7 and 8:

- 1. Why didn't Joseph's brothers recognize him?*
- 2. Why did Joseph choose to act like a stranger to them? Along with that, why was Joseph asking them where they came from?*
- 3. Why did Joseph speak to them in a rough manner?*

1. Why did Joseph recognize the brothers, but the brothers did not recognize him?

Have you ever known someone when they were young, and then you didn't see them until many years later when they were all grown up? Did they recognize you, but you did not recognize them? Why does that happen?

Because kids and teens change a lot in their appearance as they get older. Whereas, an adult mainly changes by adding gray hair, more weight, and more wrinkles. Consequently, the older person primarily looks the same, but the younger person's appearance probably has changed a lot. The point is Joseph is now older and has changed. So, he recognizes them, but they don't recognize him.

*2 Questions: How old was Joseph when his brothers sold him? 17
How old was Joseph at the time his brothers came to get grain?*

Time for your math test, like we did in last week's sermon:

The Bible said in [Genesis 41:46](#) that Joseph was 30 when Pharaoh promoted him to being 2nd in charge.

After that, there was 7 yrs of good harvest, followed by 1- 2 yrs of famine before his brothers came to him.

So that would make Joseph how old? $30 + 7 + 1 \text{ or } 2 = 38 \text{ or } 39.$

So, how many years had it been since Joseph's brothers had seen Joseph?
Joseph is currently 38 or 39 yrs old. So, if you minus 17 years from that, when they last saw him, that would equal 21 or 22 years since they had seen Joseph.

So, again, the Bible says in verse 8 that the brothers did not recognize Joseph. We just mentioned the main reasons why: Kids change a lot but adults don't change as much. Joseph had changed a lot in the 22 years since they seen him.

Bible Exposition commentary points out 3 more reasons why his brothers may not have recognized Joseph. These are really good:

1.) Joseph was now clean-shaven, like an Egyptian,

Chances are that when Joseph was 17, being a Jew, he had some type of beard. But, now he is clean shaven which obviously changes your looks.

2.) Joseph was dressed like an Egyptian dresses,

3.) They heard Joseph speak in an Egyptian language, through an interpreter.

I am not sure why the bible does not immediately tell us that Joseph used an interpreter with his brothers. But, if you look ahead to [Genesis 42:23](#) you see that he did so.

[Genesis 42:23](#) (NKJV)

²³ **But they did not know that Joseph understood *them*, for he spoke to them through an interpreter.**

2. Why did Joseph choose to act like a stranger to them, and why did he ask them where they came from?

I am asking these 2 questions at the same time because I think they have the same answer to them.

I believe it was to give him some time to evaluate them more, to see if they had changed over the years. Also, to find out where they are now living at, to see if his dad was still living, and, also to come up with a plan to see Benjamin.

So, he stayed like a stranger to them, asking them lots of questions as he evaluated it all.

3. Why did Joseph speak to them in a rough manner?

There might be many reasons. But, here is one possibility, sometimes we think we have forgiven someone for something, and then negative emotions suddenly come to the surface when something triggers it. So, maybe his emotions were coming to the surface when seeing his brothers for the first time in many years.

Have you ever had that happen where you thought you were over something, and surprising emotions came to the surface?

It is also possible that he wanted to worry them a lot about getting the grain, or what might happen to them.

[Genesis 42:9](#) (NKJV)

⁹ Then Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them, and said to them, "You *are* spies! You have come to see the nakedness of the land!"

Do you remember those prophetic dreams that Joseph had when he was a teenager?

Here are the two dreams, just to refresh our memory. They are both mentioned in:

[Genesis 37:7-11](#) (NIV)

⁷ We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine **& bowed down to it.**"

⁸ His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

⁹ Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and **this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.**"

¹⁰ When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him & said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?"

¹¹ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

Those dreams Joseph had are now coming true. **His brothers are bowing down to him.**

In the past, his brothers ran off their mouths, misinterpreting what Joseph had told them as "made up stuff," and trying to act superior to them. This kind of thing is easy to do when you run your life by your own thinking, or attitudes, instead of by

God. They will soon look very foolish for all they said back them, & all they did to Joseph, during his younger years.

Scholars have debated back & forth on whether Benjamin, Joseph's younger brother, had been born before Joseph was sold into slavery. [Genesis 35](#) has the story of his birth, and Rachel dying as she gave birth to Benjamin. So, since, the story of Joseph being sold in slavery is 2 chapters later, in chapter 37, we can assume Benjamin was probably a toddler when Joseph was sold by his brothers.

Anyway, coming back to the verse about Joseph remembering the dreams, it is very possible that had a twofold meaning:

1. His brothers bowed down to him just like the dream said would happen someday.
2. The dream had 11 stars that would bow down. That means the 10 brothers, which were in front of Joseph right now, plus another brother, which must be Benjamin.

So, let's return to the question again of "*What was the purpose of Joseph accusing his brothers of being spies?*"

This might be two reasons:

1. To make them worry even more, (to learn their lesson better)
 2. Joseph was thinking to develop a plan to see the 11th brother, the one whom he had last seen when that child, Benjamin, was around 2 years old.
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Go to:

[Genesis 42:10-17](#) (NKJV)

- ¹⁰ And they said to him, "No, my lord, (*We are not spies*) but your servants have come to buy food.
- ¹¹ *We are all one man's sons; (meaning not a group of spies) we are honest men; your servants are not spies."*
- ¹² But he said to them, "No, but you have come to see the nakedness of the land." (*In other words, "to see if Egypt has a strong military ready to fight."*)
- ¹³ And they said, "Your servants *are* twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and in fact, the youngest *is* with our father today, and one *is* no more."
- ¹⁴ But Joseph said to them, "It *is* as I spoke to you, saying, 'You *are* spies!'"
- ¹⁵ In this *manner* you shall be tested: By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this

place unless your youngest brother comes here.

- 16 Send one of you, and let him bring your brother; and you shall be kept in prison, that your words may be tested to see whether *there is* any truth in you; or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you *are* spies!"
- 17 **So he put them all** together in prison three days.

The encounter with the brothers probably brought back old painful memories to Joseph. To me, it seems Joseph is testing the brothers to see what their heart is like today. What they did to Joseph when he was a teen was very evil. *So, what are they like now?*

- When Joseph was a teen, they had talked about killing Joseph in front of him.
- They threw him in the empty cistern, which probably brought about all kinds of fears in Joseph. (*Dying by starvation? Or whatever else would happen to him*)
- Then, I didnt mention in the first sermon of this series that the brothers sat down and ate while Joseph was in the cistern. Chances are high that Joseph was hungry too. It just shows that the brothers had so much hatred that they did not care about Joseph at all. They actually justified their attitudes and actions enough that they could sit down and enjoy a meal while he is in the cistern.

[Genesis 42:17-20](#) talks about:

Joseph's first plan was to jail 9 brothers, and let **ONLY ONE** return home to get Benjamin. So, at first, Joseph goes ahead and **jails all of them**, which gave him time to think about what he wanted to do. It also gave the brothers time to worry, or get more desperate to do whatever they could to get out of this mess.

Verses 18-20 talk more about how Joseph made the plan to keep one brother in jail, while the other 9 brothers would return home with food, and to get Benjamin.

Let's start reading again at verse 21:

[Genesis 42:21-23](#) (NIV)

- 21 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.**"
- 22 **Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood."**
- 23 **They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.**

It seems that the brothers are making a connection between what they are currently going through, and what they had done to Joseph 22 yrs ago. You can see their feelings of guilt, wondering if they are paying for what they did many years ago.

Here are 2 insights:

1. Continued Anger makes you not care like you should care. It also makes you do things you should not do.

Joseph's brothers' anger made them only care about themselves. They didn't care about the teenage Joseph, and what emotions he was going through. Even when Joseph looked highly distressed back then, they did not care.

Anger that you allow to last in you for more than a day, can be highly destructive. It starts taking over your life. It allows Satan to work in powerful ways in your life, and through your life in the things you do or say.

At that point, all you see and care about is yourself. It causes you to not even realize that you are doing anything wrong. You feel justified in what you are doing. And, you definitely do not care about how you are effecting the person you are angry against.

This is why the Bible says in

[Ephesians 4:26-27](#) (NIV)

- ²⁶ "In your anger do not sin" **Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,** (*Do not allow the anger to stay in you for more than one day*)
- ²⁷ **and do not give the devil a foothold.** (*If you do not get rid of the anger, it gives the devil a foothold in your life*)

- Now the brothers are paying for what they did by feeling the guilt that is associated with Joseph.
- Their jealousy of Joseph is what started their anger.
- Then their anger advanced to misinterpreting Joseph's intentions about his dreams. "He was telling us his dreams to show how he is superior to us."
- Next, their anger causes the brothers to judge him.
- Then their anger turned into full blown hatred for Joseph.

One sin leads to another sin. Sin changes our thinking, and it progresses, all this happens especially in the case of anger. And, it will eventually cause the angry person to act like Satan, wanting to steal, kill, and destroy other people.

But, we do need to remind ourselves that back when the brothers turned against Joseph, there was one brother who did not want to treat Joseph the way the others wanted to treat him. *Do you remember which brother that was?* Reuben.

2. One other insight here:

Sometimes, if you are too easy on people, you keep them from learning their lessons. By Joseph throwing them in prison for 3 days, it gave them time to worry & to think about all they had wrongfully done to Joseph.

So, back to our bible passage, let's pick back up at verse 23:

Genesis 42:23-24 (NIV)

- ²³ They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.
- ²⁴ He turned away from them and began to weep, but then turned back and spoke to them again ...
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You see the tender heart of Joseph here. Even though everything he had gone through in life he had tried his best to trust God, you see that he had lots of feelings, too.

I still see Joseph as a guy who never, knowingly, held a grudge against his brothers.

On the one hand, he realized they treated him very badly, & I am sure he did not like what they did. But, on the other hand, he would live his life looking to learn, grow, and see what God had in mind for him. He was capable of separating his emotions.

Think about his maturity. He was 17 when he first had to have the right attitudes. Then, he went through other bad experiences from 17 to age 30. A lot of times we do not get that mature until we are much older.

Then, with his brothers in front of him, and when Joseph now realizes they are feeling remorse for what they had done to Joseph, his emotions come out and he has to turn away from them to hide his tears, and get his composure back.

He was being tough on his brothers, and while doing so, it upset Joseph because he saw they had changed. It's that old saying about when parents say "This is going to be harder on me than it is on you." (I always doubted that one) BUT, here with Joseph, that seems to apply.

Let's pick back up again, at the 2nd part of verse 24:

[Genesis 42:24 b](#)

... He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes.

So, Joseph accuses them of being spies. Then he puts them all in jail for 3 days. Next, he chooses to release all of them except Simeon until they come back with Benjamin.

Note: Some scholars believe it may have been Simeon who was the ring-leader of the brothers wanting to kill Joseph when he was 17 yrs old.

The two reasons for this belief:

1. Simeon, and his brother Levi, had killed a bunch of people when their sister was raped. So, they had displayed angry attitudes in the past.
2. Out of all the brothers whom Joseph chose to put in prison, Simeon was the one he picked.

[Genesis 42:25-26](#)

- ²⁵ Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. After this was done for them,
- ²⁶ they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left.
- ²⁷ At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack.
- ²⁸ "My silver has been returned," he said to his brothers. "Here it is in my sack." Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, "What is this that God has done to us?"

I think there was a twofold purpose of Joseph putting the silver back in their bags:

1. He would use it to make another point with them when they return back to Joseph.
2. He really did not want their money. They were family and he wanted to help them.

XI. The 9 brothers go home to their father.

We will pick up on that part of the story next week....

Conclusion

I am going to ask you a question as we close today. This is a question I asked myself while studying this week.

Here is the question:

Why didn't Joseph just come out and tell his brothers who he was?

Why all of this "game playing," so to speak?

Here is what my answer is:

He did not know if he could trust them. They had already burned him once. *If he was "up front" and just told them who he was, what was the chance they would never tell their father Jacob about Joseph being alive? And, then Joseph would never see Benjamin, or maybe never see his father again.*

The plan Joseph decided on was necessary in order for him to meet Benjamin, & his father. It sounded sneaky, but it really was a plan that was full of wisdom.

Joseph's life was a great example to us in how we are to handle negative experiences with other people.

Joseph kept getting promoted by God because:

- Joseph refused to make life about bitterness toward other people.
- Joseph considered all experiences as lessons on what he could learn.
- Joseph trusted God with his life that God had a bigger and better plan, that God's ways were higher than his, and that God would take care of him somehow, someday.

Joseph was going to bless his brothers and family, but he was going to make sure they learned some things first.