

The Story Adult Study Guide

For the Week of September 21, 2019

Chapter 3: “Joseph: From Slave to Deputy Pharaoh”



Key Events: Joseph sold into slavery, Joseph’s rise to power, the brothers’ trips to Egypt, Joseph reunites with his family

Key Character: Joseph (see *The Story* page 488 for character descriptions)

Bible Reference for this Chapter: Genesis 37, 39, 41-48, 50

GOD MANEUVERS WORLD HISTORY TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSE AND KEEP HIS PROMISE.

Joseph by age:17	-	Sold to traders (It seems Joseph was 16 years older than Benjamin.)
30	-	Called by Pharaoh to interpret dreams – 7 good years begin
37	-	7 bad years begin
39	-	Brothers visit (22 years since Joseph left home. Jacob 130.) (Jacob lived in Egypt with family 17 years.)
110	-	Died – lived 71 years with his family in Egypt

Note: Joseph was NOT the line descendant of Jesus. That promise was given to his brother Judah.

1. How might we classify Jacob’s family as being dysfunctional? Do we notice any of his family’s traits in our own families? What can we learn from this?
2. How difficult was it for Joseph to overcome the temptations of Potiphar’s wife? (page 31) Discuss God’s promises and our response to temptations based on 1 Corinthians 10:12-13: ¹² So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.
3. Out of love and trust in God, Joseph conducted himself with integrity during his time in Potiphar’s house and in prison, and God blessed him. What challenges and blessings do we face by conducting ourselves with integrity in the workplace, in school, and in the world? Consider and share personal experiences.
4. How does God use incidents in our lives to mold us and shape us into his piece of artwork (the potter and the clay; “God isn’t finished with me yet”)?
5. Although taken far from home at an early age, Joseph shows he already had a strong faith and knowledge of God. How does this reflect on his upbringing? What does this say to us as parents? At what age do we begin training our children to know and love the Lord? Do we consciously set aside time in our busy schedules every day to continue to train our children in the Lord?
6. God put Joseph through several difficult situations yet he became stronger with each trial. (brotherly hatred, threats on his life, thrown into cistern, sold to strangers, auctioned on slave block, thrown into

prison, forgotten there . . .) At which point of his life might you have been tempted to give up and throw in the towel? What does that say about Joseph's faith? What does that say about him being a prime example for us?

7. What were Joseph's intentions in the way he dealt with his brothers when they came to Egypt to buy food? (pages 34-39) How might rebuking and correcting others in a God-pleasing manner be a difficult thing to do? "Tough love".
8. Analyze Joseph's statements on page 39 when he revealed his identity to his brothers. What can we learn from Joseph and his response to circumstances in life?
9. Describe the consequences Jacob's family suffered as a result of envy, dishonesty, hostility, and sinful decisions. What kept this family together over all those years? What keeps our families together?
10. One of the great tragedies with our young people today is they are not sufficiently grounded in their faith. The world easily convinces them God and his Word are useless and do not fit into today's way of thinking (college professors, TV, friends, politicians, etc.). e.i. miracles could never occur because they are not scientific. Discuss some ways to train our children to have an "unwavering" conviction for their Lord.
11. How is Joseph an example of one who clearly understood the upper story and the lower story? What does that teach us regarding the two?
12. Discuss: get into their heads at the reunion. Joseph's head. Brother's heads. Benjamin's head. Jacob's head. Pharaoh's head.

Prayer Suggestions

- Pray for families, that parents and children are united with Christ and with each other.
- Pray for comfort in trying circumstances, and for patience to endure them.
- Thank God for hardships that have drawn me closer to him and molded my character.

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ANSWERS

1. One definition of a dysfunctional family is: A family that regularly experiences conflict, misbehavior, or abuse in a way that causes some members of the family to accommodate such inappropriate actions. Can we imagine growing up in a family of 12 boys and 1 girl - with had a total of four mothers? Certainly the hatred and distrust we see in our story had to have been brewing long before the incident of selling off Joseph occurred. It would seem that Jacob had lost control of the "boys". Families such as his, need prayer and a steady dose of God's enduring word. When we reflect on Jacob's family, we can see the great importance for parents to pray, worship, and read God's Word each day as a family. Discipline should always be carried out beginning with the law and ending with the loving gospel message. And we must practice love first and foremost.
2. While we must remain confident that God will always provide the strength we need to fight these temptations, we must also be daily reminded that the old Adam will be with us until we die. Satan will try everything he can to pry at the weakest parts of our personalities in order to get us to fall. Joseph was a wonderful example of how to say "no" to and walk away from the temptation. Also note that his reason was that it would not give glory to God.
3. First, we should ever be aware that if we lead lives of integrity, as Christ would have us do, we will face adversity. 2 Timothy 3:12 says, "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Scripture assures us that will occur. We must teach our children the importance of living upright lives regardless of the circumstances. And yes, a good name still goes a long way, even today.
4. Scripture says God is the potter and we are the clay. Every incident in our lives serves a purpose. Nothing happens to us that the Lord did not oversee. That is sometimes difficult for us to appreciate since our sinful nature wants us to live independent lives where we might control our own destiny. Remember Proverbs 16:9 says, "In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps."
5. Certainly no age is too young to expose children to the love of Jesus. Parents should plan their approach as to how they will bring up their children in the Lord. Christian day school is a fine beginning, but it is not the end all. Daily devotions at home must also be a regular moment in every Christian household. Someone once asked an interesting question: Would you train (or have trained) your child differently if you were told when they were born, that your child would be taken from you when they reach ten and placed into the home of an unbeliever? Sadly, the busy schedules in many of our homes have squeezed out meaningful family Bible time. We must work to restore that time. Deuteronomy 6:6,7 says, "These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."
6. Like Noah who waited a hundred years for it to rain, and Abraham who waited decades for a son to be born, so Joseph is a tremendous example of enduring faith. Perhaps we wonder where our breaking points may be, but looking at the life of Joseph we can be assured that the Lord will provide. He will not lead us to a point where we can no longer handle the situation. In times of constant pressures we must rely on his strength to uphold us.

7. Several years ago Dr. James Dobson wrote a best seller titled “Love Must be Tough”. This book showed there are times when we must deal with those we love using “tough love”. That is what Joseph did with his brothers. He wanted them to expose their relationship with their father, their feelings toward him, and most of all their love for the Lord. And his tactic worked!
8. Joseph saw God’s hand in his life. Here again, what a perfect example for us to follow. We remember Romans 8:28, “We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^[a] have been called according to his purpose.”
9. Although Jacob’s family endured many difficult situations, we still can see a glimmer of God in their home. We must pray that God’s will would always be the most important thing that holds our families together. Remember that a cord of three strands is not quickly broken.
10. Answers will vary.
11. Joseph always seemed to keep one eye on the big picture – the upper story. In spite of all the horrible hardships he endured (lower story), he never took his focus off of God’s bigger plan for himself and those around him.
12. Answers will vary.