

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Lesson 4 – Genesis 42

As we begin Genesis 42 there is a famine, not only in Egypt, but *over all the face of the earth*. This chapter will take us back to Jacob and will give the account of the reunion between Joseph and his brothers, an interesting reunion on all counts. As we study this part of the life of Joseph we will see long lasting guilt, change of heart, the fulfillment of dreams, and the unfolding of God's perfect plan.

Begin your study with prayer...

Memory Verse – This week's memory verse is Psalm 43:5.

*Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.*

Read Genesis 42:1-5.

In Genesis 41 we read how far reaching the famine was and Genesis 42 shows us that Jacob and his family were also affected by it.

1. From Genesis 42:1-3, what did Jacob decide to do to provide grain for this family?
2. Jacob sent ten sons but, from verse 4, who did he not send?
 - a. Why?
 - b. Refer back to Genesis 35:16-18 or the background chart on Jacob's sons in Lesson 1. What do you notice about Benjamin?

Read Genesis 42:6-20.

1. Since Joseph was governor of the land, the brothers had to come before Joseph to buy the grain.
 - a. What did the brothers do as they came before Joseph in Genesis 42:6?
 - b. Look back again at Genesis 37:6-10. Remembering this, what significance can you see for this action of the brothers?

c. What did Joseph remember in in Genesis 42:9?

d. What would this say to Joseph about the Lord?

2. What are we told in Genesis 42:8 that gives Joseph the advantage over his brothers?

Once Joseph recognized his brothers, we can only guess at the motivation behind his next words and actions. Was he punishing them for what they had done to him, or maybe testing them to see if they had changed, or both... or something entirely different? It is interesting to consider, but we don't know, so we will continue with what we do know.

3. What accusations did Joseph make against his brothers in Genesis 42:9, 12 and 14?

4. The brothers denied the accusations and defended themselves with three statements. What was their defense in each verse below?

a. Genesis 42:10

b. Genesis 42:11

c. In Genesis 42:13, what did they say about their other brothers?

5. From Genesis 42:15-16, what test did Joseph propose to them to prove their innocence?

6. Joseph put them all together in prison for three days, then called them back to him. Considering the Egyptians believed in many gods, what statement did he make to them in Genesis 42:18 that reveals his heart to us and could reveal to his brothers that his beliefs are that of a Hebrew?

7. It seems Joseph has a new plan for them to prove their innocence.

a. What plan did he present in Genesis 42:19-20?

b. How does this differ from the previous test for honesty?

8. Both of the plans set out by Joseph required the brothers to bring Benjamin to him. Looking back to Genesis 30:22-24 and Genesis 35:16-18, or reviewing the background chart of the brothers from lesson 1, why might it be important to Joseph that he see Benjamin?

Read Genesis 42:21-23.

1. In Genesis 42:21 we read of the discussion between the brothers after Joseph explains the new plan.

- a. What was the reason they discussed that *this distress has come upon us*?

- b. What specific memory did they have?

- c. What does this show you about the brothers after all this time has passed?

2. Guilt is a powerful thing, but we do not have to stay under the burden of guilt. How can we move from guilt to innocence?

3. Record the glorious promises of the following verses:

- a. Isaiah 1:18

- b. Isaiah 44:22

- c. 1 John 1:9

4. Why do you think even Christians fall prey to feelings of guilt when bad things happen to them?

5. Reuben had another view of what had happened with Joseph all those years ago.

- a. Review the events in Genesis 37:21-22. What had Reuben tried to do?

- b. From Genesis 42:22, write the question he posed to his brothers now.
- c. Who did he blame for their present distress?
- d. Considering the last sentence in verse 22, how serious did Reuben consider the situation?

6. Unknown to the brothers, Joseph heard their conversation and understood every word as they confessed their guilt to one another. In Genesis 42:24, what was Joseph's reaction to what he heard?

Read Genesis 42:24-28.

1. Joseph was moved by their admission of guilt, yet he continued with the plan he had given them in Genesis 42:19-20, and we see something more as he sends them off.

- a. What did Joseph do in Genesis 42:24?
- b. What unusual command did Joseph give in verse 25 regarding the grain for each brother?
- c. What was the final act of kindness he commanded for their journey?

2. So the brothers loaded their donkeys and departed from Egypt, but there was more to come. Consider the events of Genesis 42:27-28.

- a. What did they find when they stopped at the encampment?
- b. What was their reaction?

3. Write out the question the brothers asked at the end of Genesis 42:28.

- a. What are some things about God that we sometimes have forgotten when we ask questions like this?
- b. What are some truths about God that would be helpful to know in times when we think He has purposed to make us pay for a sin?

Read Genesis 42:29-39.

Then they went to Jacob their father in the land of Canaan and told him all that had happened to them...

1. In Genesis 42:30-35 the brothers told Jacob what had happened.
 - a. As you read their account, look for anything different or left out and write it below.

 - b. What are your thoughts about the reason for this?

2. What did they find in Genesis 42:35 that caused them all to fear even more?

3. Write out Jacob's conclusion from the last line of verse 36.
 - a. What three specific things did Jacob list in this verse that he saw as being against him?

 - b. Which of these things were actually true?

 - c. In a situation like this, what does Romans 8:28 tell us is the truth of the situation?

4. We can all find ourselves discouraged or even in despair when we believe the lies of the enemy or when we take our eyes off of the Lord and focus on what we see in the circumstances around us. What encouragement do you find for these times in the following scriptures?
 - a. Psalm 41:10

 - b. Psalm 43:5

 - c. 2 Corinthians 4:18

 - d. Hebrews 10:35-36

In closing...

1. In Genesis 42:38 Jacob said that if anything happened to Benjamin “*you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.*” This is a strong reaction, but the important thing may be to consider what is behind it. How can we know we are responding in proper concern to a situation instead of reacting in fear?

2. Fear is often more easily apparent when one has already experienced pain through a circumstance that has gone differently than expected or hoped.

a. What are some painful times that we know Jacob has experienced?

b. We have all experienced some painful times, but how can we keep those memories from causing us to react in fear in the future?

c. Although trials can provoke painful memories and fears, what does Roman 5:3-4 teach that trials can also produce?

3. Jacob said, “*all these things are against me*”, yet he was about to experience a great blessing. It would not be too long before he discovered that his beloved son Joseph was alive! What lesson can we learn from this?

Memory Verse

*“Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?
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Psalm 43:5*