

STUDY GUIDE

CHURCH NAME
THE COMEBACK
JOSEPH, PART 2
GENESIS 39:2, 21;
41:37-57; 50:20
02/18/2018



NEW VISION

MAIN POINT

God created the world and continues to run it by His will, but He gives each of us opportunities to steward our position in the world for His glory.

INTRODUCE

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Looking at your position in life, where would you like to be in five years?

Do you think most people consider God before they make their plans or after they have made their plans? Why? Which group do you fall into?

Most of us, if we are honest, tend to make plans for where we would like to go or be, then shoehorn God into our plans after we have made them. We want to be in control of the story of our lives. The problem with this is the Bible presents God as being radically in control over every aspect of our lives. The world, and our position in it, belongs to God. Our lives are not a story that we are writing, but rather a story about what God is using us to accomplish. God loves us and delights to use us in His plan. God gives each of us a position to steward where we find opportunities for God's glory.

READ AND REFLECT

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GENESIS 41:37-57.

What had changed about Joseph's position since the last verses we read? Who had God caused Joseph to become? What did his new position give Joseph the opportunity to do?

Did Joseph see his position as a result of his own skill? Why do we often fail to attribute our success to God?

Why do you think Pharaoh trusted Joseph in regards to an upcoming famine that may have been hard to imagine in a time of abundance? What does it say about Joseph's reliability and his ultimate source of credibility?

If Joseph had let his years as a captive in Egypt cause him to become bitter, do you think he would have been

as effective as he was? How can we learn to trust God in every circumstance?

Thirteen years had passed since Joseph became a slave, and he had become the second most powerful person in the entire world. Yet, Joseph did not claim this success for his own. Instead, Joseph recognized everything came from God. Once we realize our position, good or bad, is from God, we can begin to see all things working for His glory (Rom. 8:28). God gave Joseph visionary leadership which caused the Egyptians to flourish and ultimately his people to be protected and sustained in a time of famine.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GENESIS 45:4-20.

What words would you use to describe Joseph's emotion in this scene?

Read verses 5-8 again. How was Joseph able to remain patient and faithful in his circumstances?

During this time, Joseph could not control himself. Instead, he displayed his genuine emotions. He realized how much his brothers had changed. Joseph declared that God worked through even his brothers' hate-filled act of selling him to accomplish a good purpose. This assertion expresses the doctrine of God's providence. Paul focused on this significant truth in Romans 8:28 when he emphasized that God is at work in all things, both the joys and sorrows, for the good of those who love Him.

Is there a situation in your life that you can look back on and say with confidence, "God sent me here"? How does that confidence impact your attitude and actions towards current situations?

How can the truth of God's providence impact the way you approach tomorrow?

This truth about God gives us courage and hope as God's people. We believe that even when the worst things happen to us, even when we unwisely make the worst decisions or take the worst actions, God still works through those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. We believe that God is at work in the entirety of human affairs to accomplish His purpose.

Joseph would enjoy the wonderful reunion with his brothers (vv. 14-15), but he also anticipated the time when he would be reunited with his father. As a result, even before he exchanged customary greetings with them, Joseph commanded his brothers, "Hurry and go up to my father." He knew that the sooner they returned to Canaan and shared the news with Jacob, the sooner his father would come to Egypt. Joseph wanted no delay in that process.

What do we learn about our own family relationships from Joseph's pledge to provide for the physical welfare of his father and his father's household?

How will you become personally involved and make personal sacrifice for the sake of harmonious relationships in your family?

Seeking or maintaining harmonious relationships may require intense personal involvement as well as personal sacrifice. Joseph had the financial means and the political power to make the commitments to his family recorded in verses 10-11. He promised to provide everything needed for his extended family's resettlement in Egypt. Joseph promised to meet his family's needs. When Pharaoh learned that these men were part of Joseph's family, he reinforced Joseph's offer (vv. 17-20).

APPLY

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Do you think about every aspect of your life through the lens of how you could impact the kingdom of God? How might God use you in the place you work, the neighborhood you live, in the stores you shop at, etc. for the sake of His glory?

What are a few specific ways you can steward your current position in life to the glory of God?

Is there a situation in your life right now that isn't going the way you hoped or planned? How does knowing God is in control change our perspective in these situations?

What is one step you need to take to seek or maintain a healthy relationship with another member(s) of your family?

PRAY

Pray that God would help you to see you position in life as He does. Thank God for involving you in His plans of redemption. Ask for an increasing number of opportunities to live for God's glory, and pray for the ability to be a good steward of the life and position God has given you.

COMMENTARY

GENESIS 41:37-57

41:37-46 Joseph's insight into the dream, along with his ability to devise such an intelligent plan, convinced Pharaoh that Joseph had God's spirit in him. Pharaoh gave Joseph the Egyptian name Zaphenath-paneah ("Then God Said, 'Let Him Live'") and a wife of high social status. Asenath ("She Who Belongs to the Goddess Neith") was the daughter of Potiphara, a priest at On (Heliopolis), the prestigious religious center of solar worship in ancient Egypt. Joseph, who was now 30 years old, had been transformed by God in 13 years from an imprisoned foreign slave to the world's second most powerful man. He who had spent years in prison now went throughout the land of Egypt overseeing a project that would save the lives of untold thousands.

41:47-52 In addition to God's blessing on the harvests, God blessed Joseph's personal life with two sons. Manasseh's name reflected the fact that God had helped Joseph forget his hardship both in Egypt and in his father's house, with its sordid background of rape (34:2), murder (34:25-26), incest (35:22), deception (34:13), and betrayal (37:28). Ephraim's name confessed that God had made Joseph fruitful in a land where he had once been treated as a despised felon.

41:53-57 As Joseph, guided by God's revelation, had said, after seven years of abundance famine struck every country in the region, even beyond Egypt's borders. Pharaoh directed the people to go to Joseph, who sold grain to the Egyptians to preserve the lives of his adopted countrymen. However, as other nations learned of Egypt's food supply, the whole affected part of the world also came to Joseph. As it would for thousands of years beyond this point, Egypt proved to be the breadbasket for the Mediterranean world.

GENESIS 45

45:1-4. Joseph was overwhelmed by Judah's words. Not wishing to lose his dignity before his Egyptian attendants, he ordered everyone but his brothers out of the room. Joseph then released more than 20 years of pent-up emotions, weeping so loudly that the Egyptians outside the room heard it. Joseph's revelation of his true identity—undoubtedly spoken in Hebrew, not Egyptian—so terrified his brothers that they could not answer his question about his father's well-being. Violating protocol, Joseph ordered the brothers to come near to him so he could speak to them more intimately, this time explicitly identifying himself.

45:5-8. These verses stand as the theological high point of the account of Joseph's life (chs. 37-50) and one of the most eloquent affirmations in the Bible regarding God's sovereignty in human events. With amazing spiritual maturity, Joseph confessed that God had worked beyond the foul intentions of his older brothers to accomplish two vital things: to preserve

life through Joseph's leadership leading up to and during the seven-year famine, and to establish Israel as a remnant "on the earth" (within the land). The word "remnant" is an important term used to refer to Israel as the people group who would pass along God's blessings throughout the generations (Ezra 9:8; Isa. 10:20; 28:5; Jer. 23:3). Three times Joseph affirmed that it was God—not his brothers—who had sent him to Egypt. Therefore, the brothers did not need to be worried or angry with themselves. Indeed, God had made Joseph a father—a top-level adviser—to Pharaoh, and a ruler over all the land of Egypt.

45:9-15. Joseph, who had once presented a plan to Pharaoh to save Egypt, now offered a plan to his brothers to save Israel's clan by moving them to Egypt to live in Goshen during the five more years of famine that were to come. Goshen was a region in the eastern portion of Egypt's Nile Delta and was also known as "the land of Rameses" (47:11). The brothers, who were still having trouble believing that Joseph was not only alive but also a ruler in Egypt, watched as Joseph threw his arms around Benjamin and wept. To their amazement, he also kissed each of his brothers who had once plotted to kill him.

45:16-20. Affirming the commands Joseph had given, Pharaoh told him to have his brothers load their animals with food, go on back to Jacob in Canaan, and then return with their families. New to the set of instructions was Pharaoh's provision of wagons from the land of Egypt to transport the weaker members of the clan down to Egypt, the promise that Joseph's family could live in the best of the land of Egypt, and that they would be permitted to eat the richness ("the fat") of the land.

45:21-24. Joseph supplied his brothers with generous provisions for the journey back to Canaan, as well as items for the clan's return to Egypt. The translation of Joseph's final command ("Don't argue") is uncertain and may also mean "Don't fear" or "Don't take undue risks."

45:25-28. Jacob experienced a storm of emotion when the group returned from Egypt. Initially, he experienced relief as all 11 brothers came back to him. "His heart went numb" (or "was stunned") when he was told that Joseph was still alive. Jacob agreed to go to see him before he died. God's promise of blessing to Jacob (32:29; 35:9) had proven true.