

## *Patriarchs Study and Discussion Questions*

### *Lesson Nine: Joseph's Exaltation – Genesis 41-45*

Genesis 41: Read Genesis 41-45 in one sitting.

- 1) Recalling how Genesis 40 ended, what are the implications of the writer's opening words in Genesis 41: "When two full years had passed..."? **The writer of Genesis is telling us that the heavy trial of Joseph's imprisonment did not end as quickly as Joseph had hoped. The cupbearer forgot about him. We are left to imagine the tremendous disappointment Joseph must have felt, day after day, for the two full years of his imprisonment. Joseph almost certainly believed his role in interpreting the dreams was long forgotten. Indeed, at times, he may have been tempted to wonder whether God had forgotten him!**
- 2) **a) How many years did Joseph endure humiliation? (Compare Genesis 37:2 and 41:46.) Thirteen years**  
**b) According to 41:14 and 41, what events occurred quickly and unexpectedly? Joseph was "quickly brought from the dungeon" to Pharaoh (41:14). In a moment's time, he was exalted from the status of a prisoner to the lord of Egypt (41:41).**
- 3) With Joseph's sudden exaltation in mind, read Psalm 30:5b and 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. What lessons can we learn from these passages? **"Weeping may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5) and "Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" (2 Corinthians 4). If we apply these truths to Joseph's sudden exaltation, we realize that suffering does not need to be looked upon as wasted time. When we learn from it in the way God intends, suffering can end in glory. A second lesson is that we should not lose heart. God will not allow us to suffer one second longer than is necessary to bring about His intended purposes through it. Third, future joys always await us. In fact, for the Christian, joy and suffering are not mutually exclusive. We can experience joy *in* our suffering. Finally, all temporal suffering has spiritual and eternal significance, even though we do not see it at the time. Personal sharing**

Genesis 41

- 4) Which phrase in Joseph's first recorded words spoken outside prison summarizes an important lesson learned through years of servitude and suffering (41:16)? What was the lesson (implied by his words)? **"I cannot do it...but God will." Joseph's first words outside of prison imply that he had learned humility and dependence on God through suffering. He learned that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and above all, sovereign over the events of life.**
- 5) Refer to Genesis 41:41. What else had Joseph presumably learned in Potiphar's house and in prison that equipped him for his new role? **During Joseph's years in Potiphar's house and the prison, God equipped Joseph with administrative experience and ability, general life experience, and people management skills. Joseph learned God could help him flee temptation (as He did with Potiphar's wife). Above all, God taught Joseph humility. One can assume Joseph never forgot that he was replaceable; that if God chose, He could return him to a position of humble servitude in one swift, unforeseen moment (just as quickly as he had been exalted). All of these lessons were critical to Joseph's success "at the top."**
- 6) Reread Genesis 41:32. Pharaoh's dream came in two forms. Can you tell of an experience where God used repetition to make sure you clearly understood something He was saying to you? **Personal sharing**

Genesis 42-44

- 7) What was the significance of Joseph's brothers bowing down to him (42:6)? **Joseph's dreams foretold this event (37:7, 9-11; 42:9). It is also a surprising turn of events since Joseph's brothers despised him in his early years (37:4, 8).**
- 8) Read Genesis 41:56-57 and 42:3. List the people who would receive help from Joseph. What promise had God made to Abraham that was partially fulfilled in this event (see Genesis 12:3b)? **Joseph helped his own family, all of Egypt, and all the countries "in the world" (meaning, in that part of the world). This was a partial fulfillment of God's promise that all nations on earth would be blessed through Abraham.**

- 9) According to Genesis 42:15-16, Joseph tested his brothers. How and why did he do this (chapters 42-44)? Joseph said he tested his brothers for the purpose of verifying *the facts* (to know whether or not they were spies). He tested them by forbidding them to return without bringing their youngest brother (Benjamin), whom they claimed existed (42:20 and 34). In reality, Joseph did not need to verify the facts. He knew the truth. Joseph was actually testing *their character*. He refrained from revealing his identity to them, held Simeon in prison under false premises, and had his own cup planted in Benjamin's sack (putting their silver back in their bags may have been intended as a test to show character flaws of fear, guilt, and insecurity in his brothers, but it also may have simply been a gracious gift). Joseph seemed to want to "bring them to a sense of the real evil it was to deal with others in an unjust or harsh manner."<sup>1</sup> He also wanted to know if they would abandon Benjamin as easily as they had betrayed him years before. He wanted to see if they had changed.

#### Genesis 44-45

- 10) Reread Judah's speech to Joseph in Genesis 44:18-34. For whom is Judah concerned in verses 30 and 31? In what way has Judah changed since chapter 38? Previously (in the Genesis 38 incident with Tamar), Judah showed himself to be an independent, self-centered person of weak, moral character. He moved away from his father and brothers, would not risk a sacrifice for the sake of his daughter-in-law, and judged her for same sin of which he himself was guilty. In Genesis 44, Judah proved himself as a leader among his brothers. He was willing to sacrifice himself for the welfare of his father, of Benjamin, and that of his other brothers. Judah changed from a selfish man to a self-sacrificing one.
- 11) Try to imagine yourself in Joseph's place. What do you think caused his tears in Genesis 45:2? Joseph was suddenly overcome by all the years of missing his family, all the memories of being betrayed by his own brothers, and all the emotional strain of his suffering. Perhaps they were also tears of joy in seeing his brother Benjamin and knowing that God had used his trials for the good of his own family (45:5-8).
- 12) When Jacob's sons told him Joseph was alive, "the spirit of their father Jacob revived" (Genesis 45:27). Whose spirit can you revive with words of encouragement today? **Personal sharing**

#### Genesis 41-45

- 13) What part of this drama did you most enjoy? **Personal opinions**
- 14) How do these four chapters show that God's work in one life spills over to impact the lives of many others? Cite verses if you can. God worked to make Joseph a skilled administrator (through his responsibilities and trials in Potiphar's house and in prison) for the ultimate benefit of an entire nation and her surrounding neighbors. In Genesis 45:5, Joseph said, "Do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you" and in 45:7, "God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance." He saved the lives of the Egyptians (41:56), his own family (45:7), and people of many other nations (41:57). God crafted Joseph into a man who was broken enough to be used for the benefit of many, all to His glory!
- 15) Give an example of God's work in another person's life spilling over to impact you for good? **Personal sharing (Discussion leaders: encourage those in group that sharing these stories will glorify God.)**

<sup>1</sup> Kaiser, W. C., Jr., Davids, P. H., Bruce, F. F., & Brauch, M. T. (1997). *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (133). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.