

Genesis

Memorize the TRUTH!

Lesson 22
Joseph: Ruler of Egypt
Genesis 41–42

Be joyful in hope,
patient in affliction,
faithful in prayer.
Romans 12:12

Pharaoh's Dreams – Genesis 41:1-40

1. Describe Pharaoh's dreams and tell why they troubled him.
2.
 - a. How was Joseph introduced into this situation?
 - b. What can we learn about God from this?
3.
 - a. According to Joseph, what did Pharaoh's dreams mean?
 - b. What advice did Joseph offer Pharaoh?
4. How did Pharaoh respond to Joseph's counsel?

Day 1

Learn the TRUTH!



In this lesson we read the remarkable account of how God elevates Joseph to a position of great power in Egypt and brings his guilty brothers before him for the first time in over 20 years. Joseph resists any urge to seek revenge and works for their good despite the past. Ask God to give you that kind of forgiving heart!

Joseph Is Exalted – Genesis 41:41-49

Day 2

5. Compare Genesis 37:2 and 41:46. How long had it been since Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery?
6. What was Joseph's new position in Egypt? What responsibilities did he have?
7. In what other ways did God continue to bless Joseph after establishing him in this new position of power?

The Prediction Comes True
Genesis 41:50-57

Day 3

8. a. What is the significance of the names of Joseph's sons?

b. Have you ever had the experience of being fruitful "in the land of your suffering"? How?
9. How widespread was the famine that Joseph foretold?
10. How had Joseph's God-given wisdom put Egypt in a unique position at that time?

A Shopping Trip
Genesis 42:1-20

Day 4

11. a. Why did Joseph's brothers come to Egypt?

b. Why wasn't Benjamin with them?

c. What does this tell us about Jacob?
12. Describe Joseph's initial reunion with his brothers.
13. Why do you think Joseph did not reveal his identity to his brothers?
14. What strategy did Joseph use to test his brothers?

Joseph and His Brothers
Genesis 42:21-38

Day 5

15. Who was chosen to stay behind in Egypt?
16. What caused Joseph to turn aside and weep?
17. a. Why do you think Joseph insisted that they bring Benjamin back to Egypt?

b. How did Jacob respond when they told him about Joseph's demands?
18. Can you share a time when God used adversity to bring about change in your life?

Live the TRUTH!

As Joseph stood before Pharaoh, he gave God the credit over and over again. He didn't try to promote himself into the overseer's position. How different than the boastful teen so many years before, sharing his dreams of glory! Choose to exercise humility and self-control when you are placed in a situation where you could choose to "toot our own horn." Trust God and allow Him to work on your behalf.

Commentary Genesis Lesson 22

The failure of Pharaoh's cupbearer to remember him is a severe test for Joseph. For two full years, he waits in prison and nothing happens. God's plan to end his confinement begins, like many other events in Genesis, with a dream. A confusing dream comes to the Pharaoh of Egypt. He sees seven well-fed cattle emerge from the Nile and graze among its reeds. These are followed by seven gaunt cows that come out of the river and eat the fat cows. The vision is so bizarre that the ruler awakens from sleep. He falls asleep and dreams again. This time seven heads of withered grain consume seven heads of full, healthy grain. The troubling picture again jars Pharaoh from sleep. In the morning he begins to look for someone who can provide him with the meaning of these dreams.

"All the magicians and wise men of Egypt" come before Pharaoh as he seeks answers (41:8). Each admits that he is unable to interpret the king's dream. Finally, however, the cupbearer recalls that two years before, a "young Hebrew" accurately explained his own dream, predicting events that "turned out exactly as [Joseph] interpreted them" (41:13). When Joseph is summoned to the palace, he is quick to give God the credit for any interpretation he may offer. The perplexed Pharaoh presents the dreams to Joseph, adding, "I told this to the magicians, but none could explain it to me" (41:24).

God gives Joseph the insight he needs. He explains that although there were two dreams, there is only one message: Egypt is headed for an era of great plenty to be followed by an equal period of severe famine. Joseph suggests that plans be made to cope with the impending catastrophe. He proposes that Pharaoh place a prudent person in charge of planning for the lean years to come. Pharaoh should tax the people 20 percent of their crops during the abundant years. They will hardly miss it because of the prosperity, and the accumulated supplies will help the nation survive the years of shortage. Joseph's advice, like his interpretation, makes sense both to Pharaoh and his officials. He asks them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?" (41:38). Pharaoh acknowledges that the God Joseph claims to know has revealed the interpretation, as well as a wise strategy for the future.

Pharaoh elevates Joseph to the position of viceroy; Joseph will supervise the palace staff, and no one in Egypt will be more powerful except Pharaoh himself. Pharaoh provides Joseph with the trappings of power, including his own signet ring used to seal important documents, robes of fine linen, and a gold chain. A chariot is assigned for his use, and the nation is required to pay him homage. Pharaoh renames Joseph *Zaphenath-Paneah* (the meaning is unclear). The biblical writer ignores the name hereafter.

Check It Out:

For approximately 13 years, Joseph had developed leadership and administrative skills, first in the house of Potiphar and then in the service of the prison warden. He learned Egyptian customs, the ways of Pharaoh's court, and the language. God spent years shaping Joseph "for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). Joseph was 30 years old when God placed him in full-time service to the Pharaoh. Much of his preliminary training was painful, but God took His time, and Joseph endured the process.

Are you in God's prep school? God is working behind the scenes in your life. Concentrate on learning the lessons you can from where you are right now and trust in God's perfect timing.

Pharaoh also presents Joseph with an Egyptian wife named Asenath, and God gives Joseph two sons during the years of plenty. Their names suggest Joseph's recognition of God's kindness. The first he names *Manasseh*, from a Hebrew word that means *to forget*. The second son is named *Ephraim*, meaning *twice fruitful*. In his faithful commitment to God, Joseph recognizes that the years that are past are not wasted. They have helped to form him into the man he now is, the savior of an entire civilization. When the years of famine arrive, the whole nation turns to him, and soon other nations are coming to Egypt as well. God is blessing the nations through the offspring of Abraham.

Among those who come to buy grain are the Hebrews of Canaan, Jacob's 10 oldest sons. The patriarch still plays favorites, keeping Benjamin home with him, assuming his youngest son is all he has left of Rachel. We can scarcely imagine the emotions Joseph felt when his brothers came and bowed before him. With his Egyptian clothing, foreign name, and prominent position, he seems a stranger to them and acts out the part. In this, Joseph is not being cruel or vindictive; he longs to know if his brothers have learned anything since they treated him so terribly. To test them, he accuses them of being spies. By their response, he learns that both Jacob and Benjamin are still alive. He puts them all in prison for three days, then insists that they prove their claims by traveling to Canaan and returning with Benjamin. They will have to leave one brother behind as a hostage. Not realizing Joseph can understand their language, the brothers talk openly with each other. They recognize the justice of God in the situation because of their treatment of Joseph years before.

The brothers' discussion brings Joseph to tears, though he hides it from them. He selects Simeon to remain behind. He secretly returns the purchase price of their grain into each bag and sends them away, after providing food for their journey. The discovery of the money plunges the brothers into uncertainty. Arriving in Canaan, they report these events to Jacob, including Joseph's demand that Benjamin return with them to Egypt. Sadly, Jacob sees these events as part of a grand conspiracy to make his life sorrowful. He steadfastly refuses to allow Benjamin to go down to Egypt. For a while there is food; beyond that, the brothers wonder about the fate of their entire family.



The apostle Paul wrote the principles Joseph lived out: “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge” (Romans 12:17-19a). Joseph could have easily avenged himself; however, he was a godly man who had obviously forgiven his brothers years ago. His actions were designed to bring his family together again. His brothers needed to deal with the guilt they had kept hidden so long, and the family needed to be reunited so they could fulfill God’s plan.

Have hurtful words or deeds driven a wedge between members of your family or between you and a friend? Could your negative attitude be interfering with some plan of God? Romans 12:21 says, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Go try to get it straightened out. Don’t miss an opportunity to be a positive part of God’s glorious plans!



What does this verse say about “hidden” sin and guilt?

Numbers 32:23