

Joseph, Prince of Egypt



SABBATH—JUNE 11

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 41:37–57; Genesis 42; Genesis 43; Genesis 44; Romans 5:8; Genesis 45.

MEMORY VERSE: “Pharaoh [king of Egypt] said to Joseph, ‘I now make you governor over all of Egypt’ ” (Genesis 41:41, ERV).



Joseph is now leader of Egypt. Soon his own brothers will bow down to him.

JOSEPH is now leader of Egypt. Soon his own brothers will bow down to him. They will not know that the one they bow to is Joseph (Genesis 42:6, 7). The brothers of Joseph will empty their hearts of all pride when Joseph forces them to bring Benjamin to Egypt (Genesis 43). Then the brothers will ask this powerful Egyptian leader to show mercy to Benjamin when they feel his life is in danger. In the end, Joseph finally tells the men that he is their brother. Then his brothers understand that God let them do evil so that He can help them all.

We learn many things about Joseph from this story. But not just Joseph. We learn many things about his brothers, too. The brothers go back and forth from Joseph to their father and have many hard tests along the way. These trips and tests help the brothers remember their evil behavior to Joseph and their father. The brothers also see how much they sinned against God. They understand that God judges them. In the end, Joseph forgives his brothers. They all cry and feel joy. This beautiful story touches our hearts because we learn about forgiving people. Joseph forgives his brothers for everything they did to him.

THE SUCCESS OF JOSEPH (Genesis 41:37–57)

Joseph sees that the dreams of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, show what God will do soon (Genesis 41:28, NKJV) in the land. Joseph gets ready right away. Joseph offers a wise plan to the king. He tells Pharaoh what he needs to do to save his people. Pharaoh agrees to let Joseph lead.

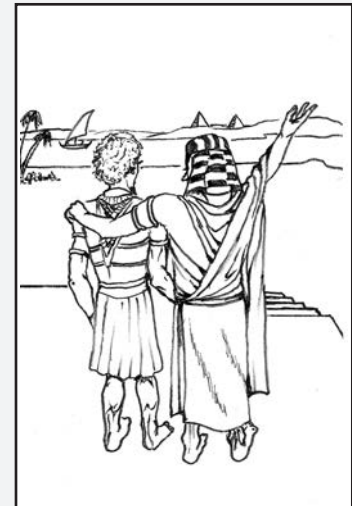
How does God help Joseph succeed? Read Genesis 41:37–57 for the answer.

Pharaoh asks Joseph to take charge of the problem. Why? Because Joseph gives him good advice. The Bible tells us that Pharaoh saw the “advice was good” that Joseph gave him (Genesis 41:37, NKJV). The servants of Pharaoh feel the same way. Pharaoh sees “ ‘the Spirit of God’ ” is in Joseph (Genesis 41:38, NKJV). Joseph is the man to do the job. He is wise and has good understanding (Genesis 41:39). For sure, we see that God gives Joseph wisdom (read Genesis 41:33; compare with 1 Kings 3:12).

So, Pharaoh makes Joseph the leader of Egypt. When we look at Egyptian history for that time, we see that other Pharaohs chose foreigners to be leaders in Egypt, too.

The next seven years are a time of plenty. There is so much grain that it cannot be counted or measured (Genesis 41:49). This sign shows us that God worked a miracle in Egypt. For sure, we can see this time of plenty as a blessing from God (Genesis 41:47–49). God also blesses Joseph’s family, too. Joseph has two sons: Manasseh and Ephraim. The names that Joseph gives his sons show us the experience that Joseph has with God. God changes the pain of Joseph into joy, as the name of his son Manasseh shows us. The name of Ephraim shows us that God has turned the suffering of Joseph into success. These names are a powerful example of the power of God. They show us that God took something bad and turned it into something very good.

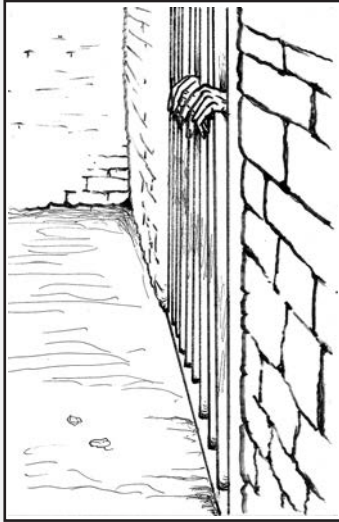
What are ways that our lives should show God to other people?



Pharaoh makes Joseph the leader of Egypt.

JOSEPH COMES FACE-TO-FACE WITH HIS BROTHERS (Genesis 42)

Read the story in Genesis 42. What happens in this story? How does this story show us that God is in control of everything?



The brothers believe that they are thrown in jail because of what they did to Joseph in the past.

There is a food shortage in the land. The food shortage causes Jacob to send his sons to Egypt to buy grain (Genesis 42:1, 2). Jacob does not know that Joseph is alive. But they will meet again.

Now the dreams that Joseph had so long ago start to happen (Genesis 37:7). Joseph is the leader in charge of the land (Genesis 42:6). He also is the “lord of the land” (Genesis 42:30, KJV). Joseph is very powerful. His brothers need food badly. They bow down in front of Joseph with their faces to the ground (Genesis 42:6). These same ten brothers made fun of Joseph and his dreams. They did not believe they will ever bow down to Joseph (Genesis 37:8). Now they bow down.

Do you see the words “they said to one another” (Genesis 42:21, NKJV)? We see these same words in Genesis 37:19 when they planned evil against Joseph. So, these words help us connect these two stories together. This connection shows us that God will cause the brothers to suffer now the things they caused Joseph to suffer in the past. The brothers spend time in jail for a little while (Genesis 42:17). Joseph also spent time in that same jail (Genesis 40:3). The brothers believe that they are in jail because of what they did to Joseph in the past. “They said to each other, ‘We are being punished for the bad thing we did to our younger brother Joseph. We saw the trouble he was in. He begged us to save him, but we refused to listen. So now we are in trouble’ ” (Genesis 42:21, ERV).

Then Reuben says to his brothers, “ ‘I told you not to do anything bad to that boy, but you refused to listen to me. Now we are being punished for his death’ ” (Genesis 42:22, ERV). These words help us to remember the warning that Reuben gave his brothers about Joseph in the past: “ ‘Do not put him to death’ ” (Genesis 37:22, NLV). So, the things that happen to the brothers now happen because of the things they did to Joseph in the past.

Most of us have done things in the past that we feel bad about now. How do we ask for forgiveness?

JOSEPH AND BENJAMIN (Genesis 43)

Jacob has a very hard time letting his sons take Benjamin back to Egypt with them. Jacob is afraid he will lose Benjamin, just as he lost Joseph (Genesis 43:6–8). But soon the food from Egypt runs out (Genesis 43:2). Judah promises Jacob that he will make sure that Benjamin comes back home safely (Genesis 43:9). So, Jacob agrees for his sons to go back to Egypt and take Benjamin with them.

Read the story in Genesis 43. What happens in the story when Benjamin goes to Egypt? How does Joseph behave when he sees his little brother?

All the brothers stand in front of Joseph. When Joseph sees Benjamin, he invites his brothers to a special feast (Genesis 43:16). Do you see that in the story Benjamin is the only one who is named the brother of Joseph (Genesis 43:29)? Also, in the story, Benjamin is the only brother who is named at all. All the other brothers are just “men” (Genesis 43:16).

Joseph names Benjamin “my son” (Genesis 43:29, KJV; compare with Genesis 22:8). This name shows us the love that is in the heart of Joseph. Joseph blesses his brother (Genesis 43:29). This blessing shows us God’s mercy and love. This blessing also helps us remember the time when Joseph was in the pit in the ground. At that time, Joseph asked his brothers to show him mercy and loving-favor. But his brothers refused (Genesis 42:21). Joseph shows Benjamin the love that his brothers did not show him.

The brothers of Joseph are afraid that they will be thrown into prison because of the money in their sacks. But Joseph makes a feast for them because Benjamin is there. At the feast, Joseph orders his brothers to sit down from oldest to youngest. Joseph gives Benjamin more food than he gives all the other brothers (Genesis 43:33, 34). But the brothers do not get jealous the way they did in the past when Jacob showed more favor to Joseph than to them (Genesis 37:3, 4; read also Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 228, 229).



Joseph gives Benjamin more food than he gives all the other brothers (Genesis 43:33, 34).

THE SILVER CUP (Genesis 44)

Read the story in Genesis 44 about the silver cup of Joseph. Why does Joseph ask his manager to put the silver cup in the sack of Benjamin?

As before, Joseph orders his manager to fill the sacks of his brothers with food. But this time, Joseph adds a strange command. He tells his manager to put his special silver cup in the sack of Benjamin.

When the cup is discovered, the brothers must go back to Egypt and face Joseph. At the feast, Benjamin was the special guest of honor. But now Joseph accuses Benjamin of stealing the silver cup. He will go to prison, for sure.

The silver cup is special. The Egyptians believed that this special cup gave its owner the power to know the secrets of men. Joseph “never announced to anyone that he had this special power. But he was willing to let his brothers believe that he knew the secrets of their lives.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 229, adapted.

Joseph uses the “magic” cup to help his brothers understand that God saw into their hearts. They are guilty of sinning against Him because of what they did to Joseph in the past. We see that Judah feels this way. That is why Judah tells Joseph that God has found sin in them (Genesis 44:16). Also, the cup is a test. Joseph wants to see what his brothers will do when they see that Benjamin will be punished for “stealing” the cup.

The brothers are deeply sad and sorry. They all feel pain and fear about losing Benjamin. The brothers are afraid that Benjamin will be lost as Joseph was lost. Then Benjamin also will become a slave in Egypt, the same as Joseph. Both Joseph and Benjamin were innocent. So, Judah asks Joseph to take him as a slave and let Benjamin go free (Genesis 44:33). This part of the story helps us remember the male sheep that was killed so that Isaac did not need to die (compare with Genesis 22:13). Judah offers himself as a gift, a substitute. Judah asks Joseph to punish him and let Benjamin go free. Then Judah will save his father from more sorrow at the loss of Benjamin (Genesis 44:34).

How does Judah’s offer show us Jesus’ work for us as our Substitute on the cross? (Read Romans 5:8.)



Joseph wants to see what his brothers will do when they see that Benjamin will be punished for “stealing” the cup.

“ ‘I AM JOSEPH YOUR BROTHER’ ” (Genesis 45:4, NKJV)

Read the story in Genesis 45. What lessons of love, faith, and hope do we see in this story?

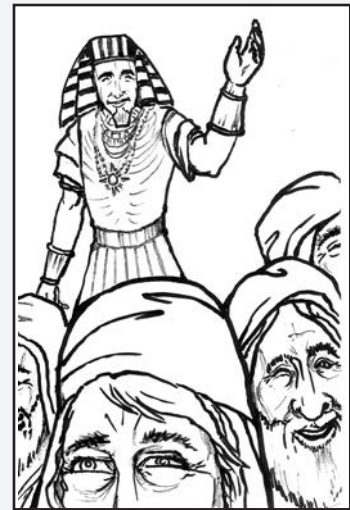
Do you see what happens when Judah tells Joseph about how much Jacob loves Benjamin (Genesis 44:34, KJV)? That is when Joseph started to cry in front of his brothers (Genesis 45:1). Then he “told his brothers who he was” (Genesis 45:1, NLV). Bible writers often use these words to help us see when God shows Himself to His people (Exodus 6:3; Ezekiel 20:9, NKJV). So, we can see that God shows Himself here in this story, too. Now all the brothers see that the Lord is in complete control, even when they made mistakes in the past. God will forgive us in the same way that Joseph forgives his brothers.

Joseph’s brothers cannot believe what they are hearing and seeing. So, Joseph must say the words again: “ ‘I am Joseph your brother’ ” (Genesis 45:4, NKJV). Joseph must tell them a second time, “ ‘I am the one you sold as a slave to Egypt’ ” (Genesis 45:4, ESV). Only then do the brothers believe his words.

Joseph announces: “ ‘God sent me’ ” to Egypt (Genesis 45:5, NKJV). These words about God help the brothers see two things. First, Joseph does not have any bad feelings about his brothers in his heart. Second, these words show us the faith of Joseph and his hope. What the brothers did to Joseph was necessary. God allows this bad thing to happen so that Joseph can save the family of Jacob and all their future children (Genesis 45:7).

Joseph tells his brothers to go to his father and invite him to Egypt. Joseph tells his brothers where they will live. They will live in the land of Goshen. Goshen is famous for its rich pastures. Joseph tells his brothers that Goshen is the best of all the land in Egypt (Genesis 45:18, 20). Joseph gives his brothers carts to take back home. These carts will be proof that will help Jacob see that his sons are not lying about their experience in Egypt (Genesis 45:27). When Jacob sees the carts, he believes that Joseph is alive. Then Jacob is filled with new life (compare with Genesis 37:35; Genesis 44:29).

Things are now good. The 12 sons of Jacob are all alive. Jacob is again named “Israel” (Genesis 45:28). This story shows us the loving-favor of God in a powerful way.



Joseph tells his brothers to go to his father and invite him to Egypt.



“Joseph is happy. He gave his brothers a test, and they passed it.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Ellen G. White, “Joseph in Egypt,” pages 213–223; “Joseph and His Brothers,” pages 224–232 in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“The sons of Jacob are in jail for three days. These days make their hearts sad. The brothers think about the wrongs they did in the past. Most of all, they think of the wrong they did to Joseph. They were very mean to him. They know that they may be punished for being spies. If they cannot show that they are innocent, they will die. Or maybe they will become slaves. . . . They sold Joseph as a slave. They are afraid now that God will punish them by making them become slaves. Joseph knows that his father and the families of his brothers may be in need of food. Joseph is convinced that his brothers are sorry for what they did to him. Joseph sees that they will not hurt Benjamin the way they hurt him.”—Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, book 3, pages 155, 156, adapted.

“Joseph is happy. He gave his brothers a test, and they passed it. Now Joseph has proof that his brothers are sorry for their sins.”—Page 165, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What if things did not turn out so well in the story of Joseph and his brothers? Will Joseph be as nice and kind to his brothers if they do not feel sorry for what they did to him? Of course, we do not know the answer to that question. What hints do we see in the story that show us the feelings and thoughts of Joseph? How do these feelings and thoughts show us who he is? How can these things help us explain his mercy and forgiveness?
- ② How does Joseph show us Jesus and what He suffered?
- ③ Joseph gave his brothers several tests. In what ways does God also give us tests?
- ④ Many years pass since the brothers sold Joseph as a slave. In time, the brothers see how they hurt Joseph. What does their guilt teach us? For sure, we must accept the forgiveness God gives us. At the same time, why must we learn to forgive ourselves?

“I WILL GO!”

In 2009, a volunteer for Jesus was stabbed to death while she went for her morning run on the island of Yap in the Pacific Ocean. The name of the volunteer was Kirsten Elisabeth Wolcott. Kirsten, age 20, was from the United States. She also was a student at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee, where she studied to be a teacher. Her classmates were very sad at the news. Many of them no longer wanted to go overseas as volunteers.

“We will not go,” some students said when they heard the news that a drunk man killed Kirsten.

Other students remembered a quote from a man named Tertullian in *The Great Controversy*. Tertullian was a leader and writer in the early Christian church. He wrote: “The more you kill us Christians, the more we grow in number. The blood of Christians is the same as ‘seed.’”—Page 42, adapted.

“We will go!” those students said when they read the quote by Tertullian. “We will honor Kirsten’s faith.”

One student, named Winston Crawford, wasn’t sure which group of students was right. Winston was 33 years old. He studied to become a pastor. Winston walked across the campus one afternoon. He opened the door of a building to go inside. When he stepped inside, he saw that he entered the wrong door. Many tables filled the room. The tables were filled with information about different volunteer programs overseas. Because he was there, Winston decided to visit the different tables. He stopped at one table about Russia. The woman in charge of the table told Winston that the church badly needed volunteers to teach English in Russia. “The teaching program will end if we do not get someone to volunteer.”

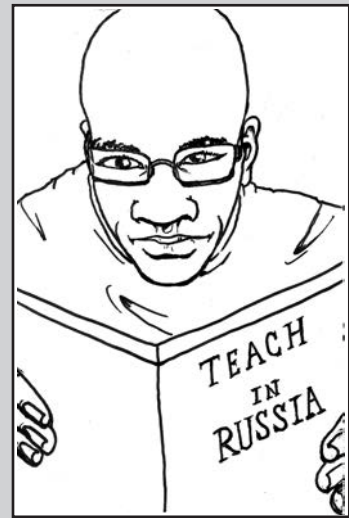
Winston was deeply touched. He hadn’t planned to take off a year from school. But he thought, “I will honor Kirsten’s faith. I will go.”

He soon got an invitation to teach in Moscow, Russia. He read about the country and raised money to buy plane tickets. 12 days before he left for Russia, two men strapped bombs to their chests. Then they blew up their own bodies in a Moscow subway. The men killed 40 people. “Should I go?” Winston wondered.

Winston thought about Paul. Paul had been beaten and left to die many times. Paul was no coward. Winston remembered Revelation 21:8. This verse says that cowards will not get everlasting life. Paul remembered Kirsten. “Why should a bomb make me afraid? God asked me to serve. I will go!” Winston went and is not sorry about his decision. He grew closer to Jesus. His choice made many lives better, including his own.

INSIDE Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



“I will honor Kirsten’s faith.
I will go.”

