

## Joseph

Read Genesis 39-50

Have you heard of the "school of hard knocks?" Most of us have learned harsh lessons that way. They are part of our testimony as believers in Jesus Christ. However, there is a better way than paying "dumb taxes" to acquire the character God wants us to have.

This lesson concludes our discussion about four men whose lives are chronicled in Genesis 12-50. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph have much to teach us. By looking closely at their lives, we can minimize the lessons learned from the school of hard knocks.

## Talking Points

- Jacob got a new name, "Israel." He had twelve sons. His favorite was Joseph.
- The sign of Joseph's favored status in the family was a multicolored coat.
- Jealous hatred motivated Joseph's brothers to sell him as a slave to traders headed for Egypt.
- Later, Joseph discovered that God had sent him to Egypt to secure a place for his family and save a future nation. Joseph was able to forgive his brothers.
- Genesis ends with the children of Israel enjoying the favor of Pharaoh, occupying the best land in Egypt.
- The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob remained in Egypt for 400 years. Over time, a new dynasty of Egyptian pharaohs installed a pharaoh who did not know Joseph's story.
- He saw their growing numbers as a threat to national security and placed Israel's children under bondage. They became enslaved people in Egypt.

## Background

Next to Jesus, Joseph may be the best example of godly character and integrity in the Bible. Joseph was the favorite son of Jacob. His brothers knew that their father loved Joseph more than they did. For that reason, they all hated Joseph. When Joseph was 17 years old, something incredible happened.

*Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. He said to them, "Please listen to this dream which I have had; for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf." Then his brothers said to him, "Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. - Genesis 37:5-8*

In a second dream, similar to the first, God revealed that the entire family would one day bow before Joseph. Enough was enough! From that day onward, Joseph's brothers

conspired to rid themselves of the constant reminder of Jacob's favoritism. Eventually, Joseph was sold into slavery for twenty pieces of silver.

Unjustly stripped of his position in Jacob's house, Joseph never let anger and resentment control his emotions or actions. Time after time, Joseph's good character won out. In Egypt, the master who owned him raised him from a household slave to a household supervisor. Later, falsely accused of a crime he did not commit; Joseph found himself thrown into a prison cell.

God's hand was clearly on Joseph. Two servants from Pharaoh's household found themselves in prison with Joseph. A butler and a baker. Both had troubling dreams and Joseph, as we already know, was an interpreter of dreams. Joseph knew what the dreams meant. Accordingly, the baker lost his head. The butler got his old job back.

### **Not Forgotten**

Two years later, the self-proclaimed ruler of the world had a couple of troubling dreams. Egypt served other gods. Pharaoh thought himself to be a god. When none of his counselors could tell Pharaoh what his dreams meant, the butler remembered Joseph. The man was despised by his brothers, sold into slavery, placed in a pit and a prison, and moved uptown to the penthouse.

Joseph always remained dependent upon God. He never got lost in the trappings of power and wealth. Joseph remained faithful to the visions God gave him as a youth. Because he was a servant leader, Joseph served Pharaoh and others wholeheartedly. Why? The dreams he told his brothers had not yet come true. The Lord God would use Joseph, the man once a slave, to save his family and the nation. The rest, as they say, is history. To get the rest of the story, read the Book.

Joseph's life lessons could make all the difference in our world today if we follow his example!

### **Bible Conversations & Questions**

- Is your family anything like Joseph's? Do you perceive any repeating familial sin? If so, what is it?
- Does favoritism roost in any of the branches of your family tree? Explain.
- How can the repetitive bondage of familial sin be broken to protect future generations?
- Joseph provides a prophetic future picture of Jesus. List all the ways you can find Joseph's life points to Him.