

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (November 19, 2023)

FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

This Sunday is our once-a-year Stewardship dedication Sunday. We are answering the question, “how can I (we) take good care of, be grateful for, all God has given me (us)?” In a real sense every Sunday is Stewardship Sunday. Each week we bring what we have, who we are, and we offer ourselves to God as a way of saying thanks. The amount we bring is not as important as the heart we bring. Our days, our future, our eternity, belong to God. Through our prayers, our songs, our presence, we declare that God is the source of every blessing, every moment, each love, each kindness, every instance of beauty and wonder that leads us to mystery and awe. Our pledge cards indicate our financial commitment to Grace of Christ. The pastors, staff, session members, volunteers, do not see your pledge card. Our financial manager is the only one who does. She summarizes the numbers and passes the total along. Using that, leaders in the church put together what they pray will be a faithful, wise, and trusting, budget for the coming year. We live by faith, trusting God. And, we use the wisdom God has given us to invest your generous giving so that the Kingdom of God grows in hearts and lives across our valley and world. In Genesis this morning we read about how Joseph trusted God, and used his God-given wisdom, to accomplish far more than he could have thought or imagined. We pray God will do that here too, through what we offer on this Stewardship Sunday, and every day!

Joseph Puts His Plan into Action (Genesis 47:13-31)

¹⁴ Now there was no food in all the land, for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished by reason of the famine. ¹⁴ And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, in exchange for the grain that they bought. And Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. ¹⁵ And when the money was all spent in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, ‘Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? For our money is gone.’ ¹⁶ And Joseph answered, ‘Give your livestock, and I will give you food in exchange for your livestock, if your money is gone.’ ¹⁷ So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the herds, and the donkeys. He supplied them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year. ¹⁸ And when that year was ended, they came to him the following year and said to him, ‘We will not hide from my lord that our

money is all spent. The herds of livestock are my lord's. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our land. ¹⁹ Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we with our land will be servants to Pharaoh. And give us seed that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate.’

²⁰ So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for all the Egyptians sold their fields, because the famine was severe on them. The land became Pharaoh's. ²¹ As for the people, he made servants of them from one end of Egypt to the other. (*verses 22-27 omitted*) ...

²⁸ And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were 147 years. ²⁹ And when the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph ... (*verses 29b-31 omitted*)

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. What was happening in Egypt? Why? Read Genesis 41
2. How did Joseph respond when the people asked for grain?
3. How did Joseph's plan and leadership benefit Pharaoh?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

4. What does it mean, “Joseph gathered up all the money”?
5. What does it mean, “buy us and our land for food”? v.19
6. What does it mean, “when the time drew near that Israel must die ...” v. 29

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

7. Have you ever been really hungry? Why? What did you do?
8. What one job have you enjoyed most? Why did you enjoy it? What were your responsibilities? Who benefited from your work? Did you see God at work in what you did? If yes, how?
9. What attitude and energy does God want us to bring to our work, or our times of volunteering? Why does He want that?
10. Share one eternal benefit in the life of another that has come from your work, your volunteering? Why are you motivated to do your best in your job? When you volunteer? At Church?

As you spend time praying, remember that prayer is meant to be the most natural part of your day. Prayer is a conversation: talking to God, and listening to God. Reflect on the blessings in your life, write down 6. Ask God to help you be a more grateful person. Ask God to help you work wisely. God is with you, He will work through you, and He will help you, because He loves you.