

## Lesson 48

# Joseph Forgives His Brothers

Joseph tested his brothers and forgave them.

# Overview

## Lesson Focus

Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy grain. Joseph recognized his brothers and tested them to see if they were changed before he revealed who he was. The brothers bowed before Joseph just as he dreamed they would, and he forgave them, realizing that God had sent him to Egypt to save his family from the famine.

## Key Passages

Genesis 46:3–4, 50:19–20

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

Explain why Joseph was able to forgive his brothers.

Describe how God provided for Israel's survival during the famine.

## Memory Verse

Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

## Prepare to Share

### Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

The account of Joseph's reunion with his brothers is filled with emotion and drama. God had removed Joseph from the prison at just the right time to interpret Pharaoh's dreams about the coming famine. Joseph was given an official position over Egypt when he was 30 years old, and he immediately began preparing for the famine (Genesis 41:46). He gathered grain during the seven good years and placed it in storage cities. Then, when the famine began, Joseph sold grain to the people. Back in Canaan, Jacob and his family were also affected by the famine. So Jacob sent his 10 sons to Egypt to buy grain, keeping his youngest son, Benjamin, at home.

Joseph recognized his brothers when they bowed before him, but they didn't recognize him. Joseph chose to test his brothers by accusing them of being Canaanite spies, but they defended their integrity by explaining that they were all sons of one man. The brothers traced their current predicament to their guilt over selling Joseph and ignoring his pleas for help (Genesis 42:21–22). When Joseph heard them talking about this, he had to turn away and weep.

Eventually, he let them go with grain and their payment secretly returned. However, he kept Simeon in prison and told the brothers to bring their youngest brother back to prove they were honest men.

On the way home, the brothers panicked when they realized that their money had been returned in their sacks of grain, and they blamed God for causing their problems (Genesis 42:28). Then when Jacob heard what had happened in Egypt, he refused to let Benjamin go in order to free Simeon, even though Reuben offered his two sons as surety if he didn't bring Benjamin back safely (Genesis 42:37–38). Eventually, their grain ran out, and Jacob was left with the only option of sending his sons to Egypt once again. When Judah took responsibility for Benjamin, Jacob agreed to let them go and sent gifts and money with them.

This time when the brothers presented themselves before Joseph, he had them brought to his house for a meal, and he was overcome with emotion at the sight of his brother Benjamin. Joseph further tested his brothers by commanding his steward to plant his silver cup in Benjamin's grain sack. After his brothers left for home, Joseph sent his steward after them to accuse them of stealing his cup. They vehemently denied it and were genuinely grieved when the cup was discovered in Benjamin's sack. They returned to Joseph where Judah begged to take Benjamin's punishment and remain as Joseph's slave. Upon hearing Judah's plea, Joseph sent away all his servants and revealed himself to his brothers, weeping so loudly that even Pharaoh and his servants heard it. The brothers were terrified, but Joseph told them not to be grieved or angry with themselves for selling him because he knew that God had used him to prepare for the famine (Genesis 45:1–8).

Joseph's understanding of God's sovereignty enabled him to forgive his brothers, and he urged them to come down to Egypt where he could take care of them for the remaining years of famine. Jacob was overjoyed to learn Joseph was alive. God promised to go with them to Egypt and bring them back (Genesis 46:3–4). So Jacob packed up the whole family and traveled to Egypt where he and Joseph were finally reunited (Genesis 46:29–30). Joseph presented some of his brothers and his father to Pharaoh and requested the land of Goshen for them. Pharaoh agreed, and Jacob and his family settled in the land (Genesis 47:1–11).

## Historical/Apologetics Background

In the account of Joseph, we see many similarities to the life of Jesus. Joseph exemplifies suffering, betrayal, faith, innocence, faithfulness, obedience, and salvation. Jesus is God, and Joseph was just a man, but the similarities in their lives are no coincidence. Compare some of these similarities in the chart below.

### Joseph: Old Testament Savior

Joseph was his father's beloved son (Genesis 37:3)

Joseph was betrayed for the price of a slave—20 pieces of silver (Genesis 37:28)

### Jesus: New Testament Savior

Jesus was the Father's beloved Son (Matthew 3:17)

Jesus was betrayed for the price of a slave—30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14–16)

Joseph was tempted many times by Potiphar's wife, but he resisted the temptation (Genesis 39:7-12)

Joseph's defeat by his enemies (brothers selling him into slavery) resulted in his eventual position of power (Genesis 45:5-8)

Joseph was sentenced to prison even though he was innocent (Genesis 39:20)

Joseph was in prison with two criminals sentenced to die: one was saved and one was condemned. He told the one who was saved that he would be saved (Genesis 40)

Joseph was 30 when he rose to power (Genesis 41:46)

Joseph gave bread to the multitudes (Genesis 41:56-57)

Anyone who came to Joseph could get what they needed to survive (grain) (Genesis 41:56-57, 42:6)

Joseph refused payment for the grain he gave his brothers; he gave by grace alone and didn't accept their money (Genesis 42:25, 45:21-23)

Joseph interceded for his brothers before Pharaoh (Genesis 47:1-6)

Joseph was called the savior of the known world during the famine (Genesis 47:25)

Jesus was tempted many times by Satan in the wilderness, but he overcame those temptations (Matthew 4:1-11)

Jesus' "defeat" (death on the cross) resulted in his position of power over sin and death (Revelation 1:18)

Jesus was sentenced to the cross even though he was innocent (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22-24)

Jesus was with two criminals sentenced to die: one was saved and one was condemned. He told the one who was saved that he would be saved (Luke 23:32-33, 23:39-43)

Jesus was around 30 when he began his earthly ministry (Luke 3:23)

Jesus gave bread (physical and spiritual) to the multitudes (Matthew 14:13-21; John 6:35)

Anyone who comes to Jesus can get everlasting life (salvation) (Romans 10:11-13)

Jesus refuses payment for the everlasting life that he gives; salvation is by grace alone and can't be bought or earned (Ephesians 2:8)

Jesus intercedes for his bride, the church, before the Father God in heaven (Jude 1:24; Hebrews 7:25)

Jesus is the Savior of the entire world (1 John 4:14)

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