

Resting in Christ ***Finding Rest in Family Ties***

Lesson #6 for August 7, 2021

Scriptures: Genesis 34; 38; 39; Hebrews 11:17-22; Deuteronomy 4:29; 1 John 3:1-2; Ephesians 6:1-13; 2 Peter 3:17-18.

1. This lesson will focus on the story of Jacob's family with emphasis on the story of Joseph. For starters, let us review the fact that Isaac and Rebekah/Rebecca had twin sons. While Rebecca favored Jacob, Isaac preferred Esau. This was not the first dysfunctional family situation in that line. Remember that Sarah had not produced an heir by late in her life; so, she encouraged Abraham to take Hagar as a secondary wife, and Hagar gave birth to Ishmael. Then, later, following God's miraculous actions, Sarah finally gave birth to Isaac. From that point on, there was conflict—which continues to this day. Look at the Middle East today!
2. So, what do we know about the story of Jacob. Jacob was about 70 years old when he fled from his parents home, fleeing from Esau and looking for a wife at Haran. He worked for seven years and was given Leah; then, he promised to work seven more years and was given Rachel a week later as his second wife. Joseph was born about 21 years later.

Moses does not tell us the age of Jacob at the birth of Joseph, but he very neatly works it into the story (Genesis 41:46; 45:6; 47:9) **so that by simple addition and subtraction we find it to be 91**. We are expected to do the sum for ourselves.—(1984). *Evangelical Review of Theology*,* 8, 171.†

Genesis 41:46: Joseph was thirty years old when he began to serve the king of Egypt. He left the king's court and travelled all over the land.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Genesis 41:46). New York: American Bible Society.

Genesis 45:6: [After the seven years of plenty and just two years of famine, Joseph said to his brothers:] “This is only the second year of famine in the land; there will be five more years in which there will be neither ploughing nor reaping.”—*Good News Bible*.*‡

Genesis 47:9: Jacob answered, “My life of wandering has lasted 130 years. Those years have been few and difficult, unlike the long years of my ancestors in their wanderings.”—*Good News Bible*.*

3. Does this make it easier or more difficult for us to understand Jacob's relationship with Joseph? Of course, Joseph was the eldest son of his favorite wife. It was readily apparent as Joseph grew up that he was the favorite of his elderly father. His older brothers, the sons of Leah and the two handmaidens, were not happy about Jacob's favoritism to Joseph.
4. Then, Joseph was given that special coat which some translations say had multiple colors while other translations say had long sleeves. (The Hebrew in Genesis 37:3 is unclear.) Then, the day came when Joseph was sent by his father to see how his brothers were doing. He traveled a long distance on foot, probably several days, and, finally, found them in Dothan. But, the greeting he received certainly was not a pleasant one. Because of several dreams that Joseph had had suggesting that, one day, his family would bow down to him, (Genesis 37) some of the brothers wanted him dead; other brothers suggested

selling him into slavery and make a little money as they got rid of him. And so, they did.

5. The sons of Jacob had a very sordid history when it came to choosing Canaanite wives. In Genesis 34 we read about the rape of Dinah, Jacob's only daughter who apparently wanted to spend some time with other young women. Then, the one who raped her asked to marry her. As a result of deceit and trickery, the entire village where they lived was destroyed by Dinah's older brothers.
6. Then, there was Judah, the one who would eventually be the forerunner of Jesus Christ. Judah's young Canaanite wife bore him three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah. We do not know exactly what happened to his older sons. The Scripture simply says that they displeased the Lord, and so the Lord killed them! (Genesis 38:6-10) Was it truly an "act of God"? God is accused of that which He allows or does not prevent. (See 1 Samuel 30 and 1 Chronicles 10.) Judah was not sure what to do with his widowed daughter-in-law. So, he sent her home to stay at her father's house. Her name was Tamar. (Genesis 38)
7. Later, Judah's daughter-in-law played the role of a prostitute when Judah was coming by. She disguised herself as a prostitute; he slept with her, not realizing who she was. When Judah found out that she was pregnant, he determined that she should be killed. Then, she showed the staff and the seal that Judah had given her in lieu of payment. Then, it was revealed that Judah was the father of her twins. One of her two sons carried the birthright tradition that led to Jesus Christ. (See Matthew 1:3.)
8. Despite these stories, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are listed in Hebrews 11:17-22 as heroes of faith. Does that sound right to you? Let us not forget that all of us are sinners. Even the heroes of faith made major mistakes in their lives. **They are not in the chapter on heroes of faith because of their mistakes, but rather, because of their repentance and return to a faith relationship with Jesus Christ.**
9. Let us turn to the story of Joseph. Try to imagine yourself with Joseph probably bound in some way or another, traveling either on a donkey, a horse, a camel, or, perhaps, just walking on his way to Egypt with his captors. He had been the favored son of a wealthy father; then, he was headed for slavery.

Meanwhile, Joseph with his captors was on the way to Egypt. As the caravan journeyed southward toward the borders of Canaan, the boy could discern in the distance the hills among which lay his father's tents. Bitterly he wept at the thought of that loving father in his loneliness and affliction. Again the scene at Dothan came up before him. He saw his angry brothers and felt their fierce glances bent upon him. The stinging, insulting words that had met his agonized entreaties were ringing in his ears. With a trembling heart he looked forward to the future. What a change in situation—from the tenderly cherished son to the despised and helpless slave! Alone and friendless, what would be his lot in the strange land to which he was going? For a time Joseph gave himself up to uncontrolled grief and terror....

Then his thoughts turned to his father's God. In his childhood he had been taught to love and fear Him. Often in his father's tent he had listened to the story of the vision that Jacob saw as he fled from his home an exile and a fugitive.... Now all these precious lessons came vividly before him. Joseph believed that the God of his fathers would be his God. *He then and there gave himself fully to the Lord, and he*

prayed that the Keeper of Israel would be with him in the land of his exile.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 213.1-214.0.† [Italic type is added for emphasis.]‡

10. Joseph must have been incredibly upset and saddened by these events. Do you suppose that as they passed not too far from his father's tents in southern Canaan, he tried to convince the Ishmaelites to take him over there, explaining that his father would pay a lot more for him than they would ever get in Egypt?
11. In some cultures, emphasis is placed on the role of the community in influencing a child. Other communities focus more on the individual's personal development. Ideally, there should be a balance of Christian influences in each child's life. So, what made the difference in Joseph's life? Was it his own personal choices based on what he was taught?
12. On that sorry journey to Egypt, Joseph grew up. He made a definite decision to follow God. Right through the Old Testament, we see multiple verses emphasizing the importance of individual choice in following God. (See Deuteronomy 4:29; Joshua 24:15; 1 Chronicles 16:11; Psalm 14:2; Proverbs 8:10; and Isaiah 55:6.)
13. It is very important for each one of us to recognize that ***“God has only children, no grandchildren.”*** That is, we cannot be saved by the faith or good works of our parents or grandparents; we can only be saved by our own personal relationship with God, i.e., faith.
14. When Joseph reached Egypt, he was sold into the service of the captain of Pharaoh's guard, an Egyptian. We do not know if Joseph at that point knew any Egyptian language or not. It was certainly a new culture with which he was unfamiliar. How was he going to respond to this new situation? Did he think that he would never again see his elderly father? In any case, he determined that he was going to be faithful to his father's God. Joseph chose to establish his self-worth by his relationship to God.
15. How are we to find our self-worth in God? Does it help to know that God wants to treat us as His own children?
16. Look at what the Bible says about how God views each one of us.

Isaiah 43:1: Israel, the LORD who created you says,

“Do not be afraid—I will save you.

I have called you by name—you are mine.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Malachi 3:17: “They will be my people,” says the LORD Almighty. “On the day when I act, they will be my very own. I will be merciful to them, as a father is merciful to the son who serves him.”—*Good News Bible*.*

John 1:12: **Some, however, did receive him and believed in him; so he gave them the right to become God's children.**—*Good News Bible*.*†

John 15:15: [Jesus said:] “I do not call you servants any longer, because servants do not know what their master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.”—*Good News Bible*.*††

Romans 8:14: Those who are led by God's Spirit are God's children.—*Good News Bible*.*

1 John 3:1-2: †See how much the Father has loved us! His love is so great that we

are called God's children—and so, in fact, we are. This is why the world does not know us: it has not known God. ²My dear friends, we are now God's children, but it is not yet clear what we shall become. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he really is.—*Good News Bible*.*

17. God is omniscient, and He loves us. He knows every detail of every person's life, as well as all the details of everything happening in the entire universe. But, when it comes to looking at His human children, He sees us through "grace-tinted glasses." No matter what we have done or how difficult our life has been, God will accept us and treat us like royalty if we will just accept His calls and return faithfully to Him. How are we supposed to respond to the reality of God's love?
18. Many books have been written in our day about accepting our self-worth and how to grow our self-worth. They even suggest we should accept ourselves uncritically. Is that really self-deception? What if we recognize that our only real worth comes from our relationship with our heavenly Father? He is the One who made us and understands our true potential.

Genesis 39:1-6: ¹Now the Ishmaelites had taken Joseph to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, one of the king's officers, who was the captain of the palace guard. ²The LORD was with Joseph and made him successful. He lived in the house of his Egyptian master, ³who saw that the LORD was with Joseph and had made him successful in everything he did. ⁴Potiphar was pleased with him and made him his personal servant; so he put him in charge of his house and everything he owned. ⁵From then on, because of Joseph the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian and everything that he had in his house and in his fields. ⁶Potiphar handed over everything he had to the care of Joseph and did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

Joseph was well-built and good-looking.—*Good News Bible*.*

19. Joseph had survived being thrown into a pit and being sold by his brothers into slavery. He had risen to a high position in the household of one of Pharaoh's close associates. At that point, he was probably exposed to a lot of details about how to behave and what things were acceptable in an Egyptian household.
20. But, trouble was brewing in Potiphar's house.

Genesis 39:7-10: ⁷And after a while his master's wife began to desire Joseph and asked him to go to bed with her. ⁸He refused and said to her, "Look, my master does not have to concern himself with anything in the house, because I am here. He has put me in charge of everything he has. ⁹I have as much authority in this house as he has, and he has not kept back anything from me except you. How then could I do such an immoral thing and sin against God?" ¹⁰Although she asked Joseph day after day, he would not go to bed with her.—*Good News Bible*.*

21. Joseph was good-looking and well-built, and Potiphar's wife could not keep her eyes off him. She repeatedly tried to lure him into her bed. But, Joseph had determined to live according to God's standards and not be influenced by other humans around him.

Genesis 39:11-21: ¹¹ But one day when Joseph went into the house to do his work, none of the house servants was there. ¹²She caught him by his robe and said, "Come to bed with me." But he escaped and ran outside, leaving his

robe in her hand. ¹³When she saw that he had left his robe and had run out of the house, ¹⁴she called to her house servants and said, “Look at this! This Hebrew that my husband brought to the house is insulting us. He came into my room and tried to rape me, but I screamed as loud as I could. ¹⁵When he heard me scream, he ran outside, leaving his robe beside me.”

¹⁶ She kept his robe with her until Joseph’s master came home. ¹⁷Then she **told him the same story**: “That Hebrew slave that you brought here came into my room and insulted me. ¹⁸But when I screamed, he ran outside, leaving his robe beside me.”

¹⁹ Joseph’s master was furious ²⁰and had Joseph arrested and put in the prison where the king’s prisoners were kept, and there he stayed. ²¹But the LORD was with Joseph and blessed him, so that the jailer was pleased with him.—*Good News Bible*.*†

Joseph suffered for his integrity, for his tempter revenged herself by accusing him of a foul crime, and causing him to be thrust into prison. **Had Potiphar believed his wife’s charge against Joseph, the young Hebrew would have lost his life; but the modesty and uprightness that had uniformly characterized his conduct were proof of his innocence; and yet, to save the reputation of his master’s house, he was abandoned to disgrace and bondage.**—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 218.1.† [Was Joseph’s prior behavior really “proof” of his innocence? Can a person change? Fortunately, this was Joseph and not Judah!][‡]

22. There was nothing fair about what happened to Joseph. But, notice that if Potiphar had really believed his wife’s story, Joseph would have been killed.
23. Joseph’s life had gone from privileged son to slave to privileged manager to prisoner; but, he quickly worked his way up to be recognized as a reliable assistant to the prison warden. See Genesis 39:21-40:22.
24. Then, there were **Pharaoh’s butler and baker who had dreams**. Joseph correctly interpreted those dreams. The baker was killed, and the butler was returned to the palace, serving Pharaoh. Joseph had begged the butler when he was returned to his position with Pharaoh to speak on his behalf to see if he could be released from prison. Two years went by.
25. But, God was certainly not finished with His plans for Joseph! One day, He gave a dream to Pharaoh. And the dream seemed to be repeated. There were seven fat cattle that were consumed, apparently, by seven lean, even boney cattle; and there were seven fat kernels of grain that seemed to have been consumed by seven lean, withered kernels. What could these dreams possibly mean?
26. Then, the butler remembered that Joseph could interpret dreams. What was the result? As we know, Joseph was able to interpret the dreams and was, therefore, chosen to be the one in charge of the surplus crops for the next seven years so the people of Egypt would have food during the famine that was coming. It is quite possible that, at that time, the rulers of Egypt, known as the Hyksos, were actually a Semitic group whose language was similar to Joseph’s mother tongue.

James 1:5: But if any of you lack wisdom, you should pray to God, who will give it to you; because God gives generously and graciously to all.—*Good News*

*Bible.**

27. When we get into difficult situations, do we think of this verse? Does this promise apply to all of us? Have you tried it?

Here is an example to all generations who should live upon the earth.... God will be a present help, and his Spirit a shield. Although surrounded with the severest temptations, there is a source of strength to which they can apply and resist them. How fierce was the assault upon Joseph's morals. It came from one of influence, the most likely to lead astray. Yet how promptly and firmly was it resisted.... He had placed his reputation and interest in the hands of God. And although he was suffered to be afflicted for a time, to prepare him to fill an important position, yet God safely guarded that reputation that was blackened by a wicked accuser, and afterward, in his own good time, caused it to shine. **God made even the prison the way to his elevation. Virtue will in time bring its own reward.** The shield which covered Joseph's heart, was the fear of God, which caused him to be faithful and just to his master, and true to God. He despised that ingratitude which would lead him to abuse his master's confidence, although his master might never learn the fact.—Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy,** vol. 1, 132.1.†

Joseph's almost instantaneous decision has changed the course of human history!

28. So, what should we learn from the experience of Joseph? **Joseph went from pit to prison to palace.** Not many of us are going to have those kinds of experiences. Did either Potiphar or his wife ever have to approach Joseph and ask for food?
29. But, what about those who are nominal or cultural Adventists versus those who are true believers? What is the difference? Cultural Adventists just go through the motions of being an Adventist; true believers develop a trusting relationship with God.

Russian author Leo Tolstoy wrote: "All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." All families, to one degree or another, suffer dysfunction, because all are made of sinners, each one bringing their own dysfunction into the family relationship. How can each one of us, by God's grace, seek to follow biblical principles of love, forgiveness, burden bearing, and so forth to bring some healing to our family relationships?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, August 6.

30. Things may be going well for us right at this moment. Does that mean that there will not be problems in the future? Of course not. Are we getting prepared? We know that the seven last plagues are coming, and there will be a lot of problems before that happens. Are we preparing?
31. Did you have a domineering father? Or, mother? Or, perhaps even a bit of an abusive parent? Did you have significant sibling rivalries? As adults, what is your relationship with your siblings? Or, with your parents?
32. There are at least two lessons that we should learn from the experience of Joseph:
1. We may face a lot of difficulties. That does not mean that God has abandoned us. God loves every one of His children, and He will do whatever is necessary to bring us to the faith relationship that He desires that we would have with Him. Think of all the events that

led up to the story as we have it. For example, did God send all of those dreams? Does God ever overrule our freedom?

2. Often, the serious challenges we face are allowed by God to prepare us for something even greater in the future. God has a plan for each of His children. And He works in various ways to work things out to the best possible result. Compare Daniel's story.

33. Victor and Mildred George Goertzel have written a book entitled *Cradles of Eminence*. It is an expansion on previous books, studying the childhood times of eminent people who have ended up being scientists, politicians, movie stars, entrepreneurs, authors, playwrights, or even sports heroes. Many of these famous Americans suffered childhood trauma. Some were quite sick. Think of Hellen Keller. Some of them came up through dysfunctional families. Others experienced significant childhood injuries. Others were raised in loving and supportive families. But, each of those who became prominent made choices that led him/her to where s/he ended up.
34. Surely, that was the case with Joseph. His success was certainly not because of his genetics. Think of his brothers and his ancestors. There were liars, thieves, adulterers, etc. in his family. They exhibited jealousy, greed, and bitterness. When they recognized that Joseph was the favored son, they wanted to get rid of him.
35. Joseph was sold into slavery at the age of 17. (Genesis 37:2) As we read earlier, according to Genesis 41:46, he was 30 years old when he was taken out of the prison and made an advisor to Pharaoh.

Genesis 41:46: Joseph was 30 years old when he began to serve the king of Egypt. He left the king's court and travelled all over the land.—*Good News Bible*.* [Did he travel to Canaan? Near his father's tent?][‡]

36. Joseph had learned many lessons, some from his early childhood, many from his time with Potiphar, and then, more during his preeminence in Egypt. But, the important thing was that he maintained a close relationship with his God.
37. There is a quotation attributed to Aristotle which might summarize in some detail the life of Joseph.

“Excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives—choice, not chance, determines your destiny”—(“113 Aristotle Quotes That Changed Western History,” KeepInspiring.me, accessed February 6, 2020, <https://www.keepinspiring.me/Aristotle-quotes/>).—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 82].[‡]

38. As it turned out and despite the difficulties along the way, Joseph's trials and difficulties prepared him for the position that he would later occupy.

Trials and obstacles are the Lord's chosen methods of discipline and His appointed conditions of success. He who reads the hearts of men knows their characters better than they themselves know them....

The fact that we are called upon to endure trial shows that the Lord Jesus sees in us something precious which He desires to develop. If He saw in us nothing whereby He might glorify His name, He would not spend time in refining us. He does not cast worthless stones into His furnace. It is valuable ore that He refines. The blacksmith puts the iron and steel into the fire that he may know what manner of metal they are. The Lord allows His chosen

ones to be placed in the furnace of affliction to prove what temper they are of and whether they can be fashioned for His work.—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing** 471.1-2.

39. Joseph determined to keep God as the central guiding star in his life. Many years later, Isaiah wrote some words about that.

Isaiah 43:1-4: ¹Israel, the LORD who created you says,

“Do not be afraid—I will save you.

I have called you by name—you are mine.

² When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you;
your troubles will not overwhelm you.

When you pass through fire, you will not be burnt;
the hard trials that come will not hurt you.

³ For I am the LORD your God,
the holy God of Israel, who saves you.

I will give up Egypt to set you free;

I will give up Ethiopia and Seba.

⁴ I will give up whole nations to save your life,
because you are precious to me

and because I love you and give you honour.”—*Good News Bible*.*

40. God will never abandon His children. In fact, He is the One who keeps us alive. (Hebrews 13:5; Acts 17:25) None of us should consider ourselves alienated from the family of God.

Ephesians 2:19-20: ¹⁹ So then, you Gentiles are not foreigners or strangers any longer; you are now fellow-citizens with God’s people and members of the family of God. ²⁰You, too, are built upon the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets, the cornerstone being Christ Jesus himself.—*Good News Bible*.*

Galatians 3:28-29: ²⁸So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus. ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are the descendants of Abraham and will receive what God has promised.—*Good News Bible*.*[†]

41. Do you think you have trials in any way close to the magnitude of what Joseph faced? Do you believe God could guide your life as He guided Joseph’s? Are you preparing for what is coming soon on this earth? Think of the many details in the life of Joseph that led to him becoming what he became.

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