

Lesson 12-“Fruitful in the Land of My Affliction”

Purpose: To understand that if we are faithful and obedient, God will consecrate our afflictions for our good.

Genesis 40-50



My lessons take a different path than the Gospel Doctrine lesson manual. The lesson outline looks closer at the doctrinal topics included in the lesson purpose and scripture block. The lessons are designed to challenge mature, active Latter-Day Saints who have a solid Gospel foundation and are looking for insights into the scriptures that will broaden their faith and understanding.

If you are interested in downloading the Powerpoint file, links to source material or reading posts about improving Gospel Doctrine class preparation, delivery and engagement, you can join my Facebook Group and have full access to the content posted there. The link is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/188904648521022/>

Last Week's Lesson Challenge

While not as dramatic as Joseph's, we daily face moral challenges. We're not likely not to commit adultery, but possibly quietly dishonest, cheat or lie. What does Joseph's example and exclamation teach us, "how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God."

Consider the small moral decisions that you make each day. Are they judged as a sin against God?

Would anyone share their thoughts the small decisions we make each day?

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 40 - Joseph interprets the dreams of Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker—The butler fails to tell Pharaoh about Joseph.

Chapter 41 - Pharaoh dreams of the cattle and the ears of grain—Joseph interprets the dreams as seven years of plenty and seven of famine—He proposes a grain storage program—Pharaoh makes him ruler of all Egypt—Joseph marries Asenath—He gathers grain as the sand upon the seashore—Asenath bears Manasseh and Ephraim—Joseph sells grain to Egyptians and others during the famine.

Chapter 42 - Jacob sends his sons to buy grain in Egypt—They bow before Joseph—He makes harsh accusations against them, imprisons Simeon, and sends them back for Benjamin.

Chapter 43 - Jacob is persuaded to send Benjamin to Egypt—Joseph's brothers show respect to him—They all eat and drink together.

Chapter 44 - Joseph arranges to stop the return of his brothers to Canaan—Judah offers himself in place of Benjamin for their father's sake.

Chapter 45 - Joseph makes himself known to his brothers—They rejoice together—Pharaoh invites Jacob and his family to dwell in Egypt and eat the fat of the land.

Chapter 46 - The Lord sends Jacob and his family of seventy souls to Egypt—The descendants of Jacob are named—Joseph meets Jacob.

Chapter 47 - The Israelites settle in Goshen—Jacob blesses Pharaoh—Joseph sells grain to the Egyptians—Pharaoh receives the Egyptians' cattle and lands—Jacob desires to be buried with his fathers in Canaan.

Chapter 48 - Jacob tells of the appearance of God to him in Luz—He adopts Ephraim and Manasseh as his own children—Jacob blesses Joseph—He puts Ephraim before Manasseh—The seed of Ephraim will become a multitude of nations—The children of Israel will come again into the land of their fathers.

Chapter 49 - Jacob blesses his sons and their seed—Reuben, Simeon, and Levi are chastened—Judah will rule until Shiloh (Christ) comes—Joseph is a fruitful bough by a well—His branches (the Nephites and Lamanites) will run over the wall—The Shepherd and Stone of Israel (Christ) will bless Joseph temporally and spiritually—Jacob chooses to be buried with his fathers in Canaan—He yields up the ghost and is gathered to his people.

Chapter 50 - Jacob's body is embalmed—Joseph buries him in Canaan—Joseph comforts his brothers—The children of Israel multiply—Joseph promises that God will bring Israel out of Egypt into Canaan—Joseph dies in Egypt and is embalmed.

The story of Joseph of Egypt, his interpretation of dreams, his rise to power in Egypt and his forgiveness of his brothers are familiar stories.

Today, we will look at these stories in an overview, focusing on what we can learn from Joseph's actions.

There are several gospel principles and lessons that are taught in the concluding story of Joseph, his brothers and Jacob. For example:

- How Jehovah remembers and prospers the faithful, especially those who remain faithful in adversity.
- How we receive and interpret revelation from God.
- The providential need for saving when we have plenty so that we may come in times of famine.
- The need to forgive, no matter what the circumstances.
- The importance of family above all else.
- Repentance and forgiveness, in all of its forms.
- The lineage of Twelve Tribes.
- The adoption of Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, as part of Abraham's lineage and birthright.
- The blessings of fathers to their children.
- The Nephites and Lamanites will come from lineage of Jacob, Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim.
- The Tribe of Judah will rule until Christ comes in the flesh as a descendant of Judah.

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The spiritual greatness of Joseph is a remarkable thing. How many people have become bitter over some real or imagined slight, or blamed the Lord for some personal tragedy? In the very midst of being faithful and holding true to that which is right, Joseph was falsely accused and thrown into prison. How easy it would have been for him to give up, to say, "What's the use of trying to serve God? All He does is punish me." But there was not a trace of bitterness, no blaming the Lord. Joseph just continued being righteous and faithful. Unselfishly he offered to interpret the dreams of his two fellow prisoners, telling them that the knowledge came from God. He still trusted in the Lord, although he must have felt doomed to spend his life in prison. If any person had cause for discouragement and bitterness, it was Joseph, but he never faltered in his faith. Truly, Joseph is a model to be emulated.

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-genesis-2-samuel/genesis-37-50-joseph-the-power-of-preparation?lang=eng>

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When we consider the rise of a young shepherd boy to a position of world power, then we begin to glimpse the knowledge and understanding that Joseph must have accumulated. We assume that initially his knowledge was gained through listening to the Lord; but we must also note the wisdom that must have been required in his position in the Egyptian government, especially in the administration of the crops and lands of Egypt. After Joseph had interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh he commented, "Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt." To this Pharaoh responded, "There is none so discreet and wise as thou art" (Gen. 41:33, 39). While this may be viewed as a statement of Pharaoh's recognition of Joseph's spiritual powers, it proved to be true of Joseph's wisdom in temporal administration as well.

Joseph's self-control and patience are seen again and again in the fabric of his lifestyle. They show in the incident with Potiphar's wife; they show in his willingness to trust in the Lord during his long imprisonment. In fact, Josephus, the Jewish historian, makes an interesting comment concerning Joseph's reaction to his imprisonment. In a passage sounding amazingly like Christ before Pilate, Josephus records:

"Now Joseph, commending all his affairs to God, did not betake himself to make his defence, nor to give an account of the exact circumstances of the fact, but silently underwent the bonds and the distress he was in, firmly believing that God, who knew the cause of his affliction and the truth of the fact, would be more powerful than those that inflicted the punishments upon him" (Antiquities of the Jews, Book II, v:1).

<https://www.lds.org/ensign/1980/09/joseph-model-of-excellence?lang=eng>

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Quiet Slumber: Revelation through Dreams by Ryan C. Jenkins

“For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction” (Job 33:14–16).

Near the end of his Liberty Jail ordeal, the Prophet Joseph Smith said: “We believe that we have a right to revelations, visions, and dreams from God, our Heavenly Father; and light and intelligence, through the gift of the Holy Ghost . . . on all subjects pertaining to our spiritual welfare; if it so be that we keep his commandments, so as to render ourselves worthy in his sight.” Joseph Smith experienced and understood revelation, and the Prophet’s life teaches us that as we live in righteousness our Father in Heaven will communicate in a variety of ways and in unique circumstances.

Sometimes references in the scriptures to visions and dreams are used interchangeably. Elder Bruce R. McConkie made the distinction: “An inspired dream is a vision given to a person while he sleeps. . . . All inspired dreams are visions, but all visions are not dreams. Visions are received in hours of wakefulness or of sleep and in some cases when the recipient has passed into a trance; it is only when the vision occurs during sleep that it is termed a dream.” Sleep is something we all have in common. What satisfaction or level of enjoyment we gain from the experience varies, as does the effect it has on our mind and heart. Most of our subconscious state goes without memory. Irrational and absurd dreams are easily dismissed by an individual who has the Spirit of God. But on occasion the Lord judiciously issues dreams for his divine purposes and an individual’s personal growth.

BYU Religious Studies Center at <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/volume-12-number-1-2011/quiet-slumber-revelation-through-dreams>

(Ryan C. Jenkins is a noted LDS Author and was a teacher and curriculum writer for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion when this was written.)

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In an April 2003 General Conference address, Elder David E. Sorensen of the Presidency of the Seventy said:

Joseph's brothers jealously hated him. They plotted to take his life and finally sold him as a slave. Joseph was carried into Egypt and struggled for years to rise from slavery. During these challenging times, Joseph might have condemned his brothers and sworn revenge. He might have soothed his pain by scheming to get even someday. But he did not.

In time, Joseph became ruler over all of Egypt, second in command only to Pharaoh. During a devastating famine, Joseph's brothers traveled to Egypt for food. Not recognizing Joseph, they bowed down to him because of his high position. Surely at that moment Joseph had the power to exact revenge. He might have put his brethren in prison or sentenced them to death. Instead he confirmed his forgiveness. He said: "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither. ... And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity ... and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." Joseph's will to forgive changed bitterness to love.

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2003/04/forgiveness-will-change-bitterness-to-love?lang=eng>

In Doctrine & Covenants 64:8-14, the Lord gave this revelation to Joseph Smith about His expectation for how we should forgive:

8 My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened.

9 Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

10 I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.

11 And ye ought to say in your hearts—let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds.

12 And him that repenteth not of his sins, and confesseth them not, ye shall bring before the church, and do with him as the scripture saith unto you, either by commandment or by revelation.

13 And this ye shall do that God may be glorified—not because ye forgive not, having not compassion, but that ye may be justified in the eyes of the law, that ye may not offend him who is your lawgiver—

14 Verily I say, for this cause ye shall do these things.

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The touching scene, in which Joseph finally revealed himself to his brothers, demonstrates the Christlike nature of his character. He forgave without bitterness, extended love when undeserved, and saw the Lord's hand in all that happened. But his similarities to Christ go much deeper. As Nephi said, all things from the beginning of the world were given to typify, or symbolize, Christ. It has already been shown how Abraham was a type of the Father and Isaac a type of Jesus when Abraham was commanded to offer Isaac in sacrifice. This act was "a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son".

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught that all prophets are types of Christ: "A prophet is one who has the testimony of Jesus, who knows by the revelations of the Holy Ghost to his soul that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. In addition to this divine knowledge, many of them lived in special situations or did particular things that singled them out as types and patterns and shadows of that which was to be in the life of him who is our Lord." (The Promised Messiah, p. 448.)

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Likewise, the life and mission of Joseph typifies the life and mission of Jesus. Consider the following:

- Joseph was the favored son of his father; so was Jesus (see Genesis 37:3; Matthew 3:17).
- Joseph was rejected by his brothers, the Israelites, as was Jesus (see Genesis 37:4; John 1:11; Isaiah 53:3; 1 Nephi 19:13–14).
- Joseph was sold by his brothers into the hands of the Gentiles, just as Jesus was (see Genesis 37:25–27; Matthew 20:19).
- Judah, the head of the tribe of Judah, proposed the sale of Joseph. Certain leaders of the Jews in Jesus’ day turned Jesus over to the Romans. Judas (the Greek spelling of Judah) was the one who actually sold Jesus. (See Genesis 37:26; Matthew 27:3.)
- Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver, the price of a slave his age. Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave His age. (See Genesis 37:28; Matthew 27:3; Exodus 21:32; Leviticus 27:5.)
- In their very attempt to destroy Joseph, his brothers actually set up the conditions that would bring about their eventual temporal salvation—that is, Joseph, by virtue of being sold, would become their deliverer. Jesus, by His being given into the hands of the Gentiles, was crucified and completed the atoning sacrifice, becoming the Deliverer for all mankind.
- Joseph began his mission of preparing salvation for Israel at age thirty, just as Jesus began His ministry of preparing salvation for the world at age thirty (see Genesis 41:46; Luke 3:23).
- When Joseph was finally raised to his exalted position in Egypt, all bowed the knee to him. All will eventually bow the knee to Jesus. (See Genesis 41:43; D&C 88:104.)
- Joseph provided bread for Israel and saved them from death, all without cost. Jesus, the Bread of Life, did the same for all men. (See Genesis 42:35; John 6:48–57; 2 Nephi 9:50.)

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Elder Hartman Rector, Jr. said:

“Joseph vividly demonstrated why he was favored of the Lord, or, as the scriptures said, why ‘the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man. ... ’ (Gen. 39.) His reliance was upon the Lord. His trust was in the Lord, and his allegiance ran to the Lord.”

“I believe this is the greatest lesson that can be learned is to do the right thing because you love the Lord. It is so vitally important that, I feel, if you do anything in righteousness for any other reason than you love the Lord, you are wrong—at least you are on very shaky ground. And, somewhere your reasons for acting in righteousness will not be strong enough to see you through. You will give way to expediency, or peer group pressure, or honor, or fame, or applause, or the thrill of the moment, or some other worldly reason. Unless your motives are built upon the firm foundation of love of the Lord, you will not be able to stand.” (Hartman Rector, Jr., “Live above the Law to Be Free,” Ensign, Jan. 1973, p. 130.)

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This Week's Lesson Challenge

The lesson focused on

- (1) Joseph's faith in Jehovah to help him regardless of the adversity placed before him,
- (2) What should we learn about our dreams and if they are prophetic,
- (3) How Joseph forgave his brothers and
- (4) How Joseph is in the similitude of Jesus Christ.

This week, take one of these four areas and focus your gospel studies on learning how to become more like Joseph of Egypt.