

Monday - Week Seven

Lesson Eighteen: Joseph Sold into slavery

Read: Genesis 37:2 - 36

Summary: God used Joseph to save the lives of his father and brothers. In the process God set the stage for Moses' exodus hundreds of years later (by leading Israel's family down to Egypt).

Background and Comments

- Verse two says that this is the account of Jacob. Yet the next chapters tell the story of Joseph. Was Moses (the author of Genesis) confused? No, the story of Joseph is really the story of Jacob's family. God used Joseph to save their lives and to get them to Egypt. It was Judah, not Joseph, who would carry on the line of the Messiah.
- We have seen that the patriarchs had family problems. Jacob's family was no exception. His favoritism is inexcusable (especially since his own life had been complicated because his father had a favorite).
- Joseph's coat ("richly ornamented" is perhaps a better translation than "many colored") was the kind worn by overseers. Jacob was saying that Joseph was to rank over his brothers.

Lessons for Today

- It's difficult for us to know why Joseph's brothers hated him so much. Was Joseph just misunderstood in his attempts help his brothers? Was he a proud young man who flaunted his favored status? Was he lacking in common sense (he told his brothers both of his dreams ... perhaps he should have stopped with the first one since they got upset at him)? We just don't know. In the next lessons we will get to know Joseph much better. We will see Joseph's trust in the Lord grow stronger and stronger.
- Reuben wanted to save his brother but didn't take a strong enough stand in the beginning. Has it ever happened that your intentions were good but that you didn't follow through as strongly as you needed to?

Read: Psalm 31; Romans 3.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, help the families in our congregation to grow stronger. When favoritism rears its head let parents realize how dangerous it is. Similarly, do not let favoritism take root in our church family. Let us use Your love for all people as an example. In Jesus' name; Amen.

Tuesday - Week Seven

Lesson Nineteen: Joseph in prison

Read: Genesis 39 and 40

Summary: Joseph suffered a period of humiliation when he arrived in Egypt even though he didn't do anything wrong.

Background and Comments

- Joseph had three reasons for Mrs. Potiphar that explained why he couldn't sleep with her (v 8-9). Can you pick them out?
- It seems that Potiphar didn't believe his wife when she charged Joseph with attempted rape because he didn't have Joseph killed. If a servant had attempted to rape his master's wife he would have certainly been executed. Potiphar had put all of his trust in Joseph for good reason - he knew what kind of person Joseph was. Why did he throw Joseph in prison? It would have been socially unacceptable to accept the word of a servant over the word of his wife. No doubt he was upset (v 19) because he had to part with Joseph.
- Can you pick out the ways in which God blessed Joseph in prison? How did Joseph give God glory while he was in prison?

Lessons for Today

- Joseph must have shared his faith with Potiphar because Potiphar noticed that the Lord's favor was on Joseph. Evidently Joseph attributed his success to God's grace. Sometimes Christians look at their jobs as separate from their faith. God wants our faith to shine brightly in every area of our life. How can you display your faith where you work?
- Joseph had learned an important lesson about defeating temptation: stay away from it. After Mrs. Potiphar began tempting him Joseph tried to stay away from her. How can you apply that lesson in your life?
- Joseph suffered even though he didn't fall into the sin of adultery with Mrs. Potiphar. God used this period of humiliation to put down his pride before Joseph's lightning fast rise to a powerful position in the government. Has God used tough times in your life to teach you humility? How?

Read: Psalm 32; Romans 4.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, cause me to be willing to say no to sin even if it means that I will have to suffer. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen.

Wednesday - Week Seven

Catechism Review

Read Questions 25-30

1. What would you say if someone said this: "God just gave us these commandments because He wanted to take all the fun out of life"? (Give examples)

How do you sometimes fall into that same line of argument in your own mind?

2. Give an example of a sin of omission and a sin of commission that you have committed in the last week.

3. Sometimes we don't take God's law as seriously as we should. We need to remember that the One who gave us the law is the Almighty God! How can you keep the seriousness of the law in mind?

4. Now that you have thought about the severity of the law (just how much it actually demands) think about Jesus. He kept God's law perfectly. He stands ready to give you the strength to defeat temptation too. How will that affect your prayer life?

Read: Psalm 33; Romans 5.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, help me to live the way You want me to. Amen.

Thursday - Week Seven

Lesson Twenty: Joseph made Prime Minister of Egypt

Read: Genesis 41

Summary: God had not forgotten Joseph in prison. He prepared Joseph for the job of a lifetime.

Background and Comments

- Joseph waited in the prison for two years! Joseph might have thought that God had forgotten him. Little did Joseph know what God had in store for him. Little do we know what God has in store for us.
- The Pharaoh's dreams were not the prettiest dreams in the world. Imagine thin, sickly cows devouring fat, healthy cows! It's no wonder Pharaoh was disturbed by these nightmares.
- God didn't only guide Joseph as he interpreted the dreams He also gave Joseph great wisdom when it came to making plans for the seven years of plenty and the seven years of famine. Pharaoh made an outstanding choice for his "second in command".

Lessons for Today

- Sometimes we might wonder about the meanings of our dreams. Certainly it's possible to "interpret" some of our dreams; if we continually have dreams that we forget all the answers to a test it might be a good indication that we are nervous about taking tests. Our subconscious mind is active when we sleep. Yet two cautions need to be thought through:
 1. Interpreting dreams is inexact at best. What we might think is a clear message might be the pizza that we had before we went to bed. We never can be sure.
 2. It's doubly dangerous to say that a dream is a message from God (we can't even figure out what ordinary dreams mean!). God has given us His clear Word for direction in our life. This is not to say that it's impossible for God to tell us something through a dream - but we need to put our confidence in the Bible, not in dreams.
- Joseph's rise to power could have caused his head to swell with pride and to forget God. Joseph had become too mature a believer for that.

Read: Psalm 34; Romans 6.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, allow me to handle success as well as Joseph. Amen.

Friday - Week Seven

Life Questions

Topic/Question: What is wrong with homosexuality? Some churches even condone homosexuality among their pastors.

Bible References and Considerations

- The Bible has many references to the sin of homosexuality: Romans 1:21; 26-27; Leviticus 18:22; Deuteronomy 22:5; Genesis 13:13; 18:16-23; 19:1-29; 1 Timothy 1:10; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. Particularly instructive are the Romans 1 passages. Paul says that men and women *exchanged* (v 26-27) the natural sexual relationship that God set up for something else, something sinful. (Note the word exchange in v 23 and 25 as well).
- Romans 1 gives us a look inside the minds of hardened sinners. Paul says that their hearts are darkened (v 21) and that they do not have God's truth. Verse 32 is the scariest of all. They not only practice evil themselves but approve of it when others commit the same sins. One look at the homosexual community confirms Paul's words. They work diligently to push America to accept and even reward their deviant, sinful behavior.
- Romans 1:27 says that men committed indecent acts with other men and *received in themselves the due penalty for their sin*. God says that their unnatural sin brings its own consequences. AIDS can be a frightening consequence of their sin. Yet a much more frightening consequence awaits them after they die.

Practically Speaking

- What is our response toward homosexuals to be? The same as God's response: love. God loved them (and us) so much that He sent Jesus to suffer and die for their sins. Therefore we will love them as well. True love demands that we preach God's law to them so that they can see and repent of their sin (just as love demands us to do the same with anyone caught in a sin). Unless they see their sin they will not see that they need Jesus.
- How would you respond: "You think that homosexuals are going to hell? What about you? You sin too." Of course we all sin. The key question to ask is if we are sorry for those sins. If someone is defiantly living in any sin they are not sorry for their sin and have pushed God's forgiveness away.

Read: Psalm 35; Romans 7.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, help us to show true love to all people; Amen.