

LESSON 6

A BUSINESS TRIP INTO EGYPT

Scripture Text: *Genesis 42*



Joseph's dreams are beginning to be fulfilled. His brothers bowed to the earth before Joseph. He had dominion over them. Joseph provided physical food for them. Jesus provides spiritual food for us. Joseph began a test of his brothers. Jesus proves us by testing. Joseph's brothers are being led to repentance. They acknowledge their guilt to themselves, which is the first step to salvation.

MEMORY VERSE: *"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."*

Philippians 4:19

Bearing Responsibility

Genesis 42:1-4 Joseph was selling corn to those who were suffering from famine. Back in Canaan, Joseph's father's family faced starvation without more food. Jacob called his ten sons and sent them to buy corn. But Benjamin, the youngest, he kept at home, **lest peradventure mischief befall him**. He remembered with pain a time when he had sent a young son on an errand from which he never returned.

Genesis 42:5-16 When the brothers reached Joseph they did not know him. His dress, his position, the years which had passed kept them from recognizing him. But Joseph knew them. They **bowed down themselves before him**. And Joseph remembered those dreams (Genesis 37:5-10). A plan formed in his mind. He would test his brothers. He would give them an opportunity to prove themselves trustworthy. He accused them of being spies and professed doubt of their account of their family and mission in Egypt. Their mention of a younger brother remaining at home gave him an opening. He told them they must bring that youngest brother to Egypt. To ensure their bringing him, he would keep all in prison except one who would be sent to bring Benjamin.

Genesis 42:17-20 After keeping all of the brothers for three days, Joseph relented a little. He would keep but one while the rest went for Benjamin. Thus, their families could receive food. If they brought the brother, they would not be punished as spies. **This do, and live; for I fear God**. Saying this, Joseph gave testimony of the faith in his Father, that He would deliver.

Everyone coming to Christ has a little Benjamin in his or her life that they are trying to hold back. God knows what it is in every case, and He holds back something from us until we bring this little "Benjamin" to Him.

Genesis 42:21-24 Speaking in Hebrew, which they thought Joseph did not understand, the brothers talked together. Looking into themselves for the reason for their trouble (the first place we all should look), they thought they found it in their act of selling Joseph. They laid it all bare—their knowledge of his anguish, their hardhearted deafness to his pleadings, the lie to their father, and all. **We are verily guilty . . .** Reuben recalled his advice against the act. **Ye would not hear. Therefore, . . . his blood is required**. Joseph understood. His tender heart was touched and he withdrew to weep. Returning, he bound Simeon for imprisonment.

One bad trait of human nature is the disposition to shift blame upon others. Some children are not trained to bear

responsibility for their acts, but are allowed to go on their way leaving their mistakes to be cleared up by someone else. Joseph's brothers seem to have asked first, "What have we done that caused this trouble?" They found the fault in themselves. Their guilt brought their distress. This confession to themselves was the first step toward confession to God and to the injured ones.

To be saved we must first acknowledge ourselves to be sinners. A disposition to bear responsibility for our acts makes this acknowledgment much easier. Training our children to accept the results of their acts and not to shift blame for them will help them to open their hearts to repentance.

The Goodness and Severity of Joseph

Genesis 42:25-28 Joseph sent them away with sacks of food, the payment money hidden in the sacks, and provision for the way home. With dismay, while stopping along the way, one found the money in his sack, with no explanation for it being there. **Their heart failed them, and they were afraid.** Their recent difficulties joined with their guilty consciences to cause great fear. Yet we see a better side to their character. They were reverently conscious of God's hand in their lives. (Thankful for the influence of a godly raising.) **What is this that God hath done?**

Joseph said, **"I fear God."** We see kindness in his decision to imprison one brother rather than nine. He had concern that their families receive needed food. He wept upon hearing his brothers acknowledge guilt. He gave gifts to each of them. He invited them back and gave them an incentive to return.

We find a quality of severity in Joseph in his sternness. We see it in his making himself strange and speaking roughly to his brothers, in his accusation of them, in his binding of Simeon, and in his demand that they bring Benjamin. Why did he do this? He knew it would bring suffering to his father as well as to them. Was it not for the purpose of testing them? The blessing to be gained if they proved true would be great enough to warrant the suffering. God is love, yet He tests us. He allows us to suffer many hard things of life in order that we may prove true. By chastening His children God develops the best in them. The Christian life calls for real manhood and womanhood, willing to stand alone and face the tests courageously and honestly.

A True Commitment

Genesis 42:29-38 Reaching home they told all the story to Jacob, their father. Then they discovered all their money and were again afraid. Jacob was very distressed at the demand to send Benjamin. He could see his children being taken from him one by one. Joseph, Simeon, and now Benjamin. No, he would not let him go. Reuben offered the lives of his two sons as surety that he would bring Benjamin safely back. What more could he offer? This was his best.

For twenty years and more, Joseph's brothers had carried guilty consciences. They had hated Joseph, sold him, and lied about it to their father. They had acted very foolishly. They had exchanged an annoyance with their brother for the bitterness and fear of guilt. Nothing else can give the pain which a guilty conscience does. Nothing can remove it but repentance and washing in the blood of Christ, and committing our all to Him. Jesus promises **to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne . . .** (Revelation 3:21).

JUST FOR THOUGHT

Too many folks these days expect to get to the Promised Land without making any promises.