Lesson 3

Joseph- He showed God’s Love

“Look who’s coming over there! It’s that bragging brother of ours. Carrying tales to our father to get us in trouble again no doubt. Let’s kill him. No one will see us out here in the pastures. We’ll tear that fancy shirt off his back. Everyone will think he was attacked by a wild animal.”

As Joseph came near, ten strong and angry men were plotting his destruction. It would seem no one would be able to escape such strength and wickedness. One man would be small and helpless in this situation. Evil would overpower him.

But no power of evil is strong enough to interfere with the will of God. God had a purpose for the life of Joseph. God cared for him as a person and wanted to use him in a magnificent plan to save His people from disaster. God wanted to show us that He provides for mankind in the midst of a wicked world. He wanted to teach us to trust God and follow His ways in love and submission.

We will see now how God preserved Joseph and made his life a lesson for us.

In this lesson you will study . . .

A Son Is Preserved by God
A Slave Obeys God’s Will
A Brother Shows God’s Love
This lesson will help you . . .
Give examples of God’s care and provision.

Explain how daily actions demonstrate faith and devotion to God.

Have personal faith in God, and accept His provision for you.

A SON IS PRESERVED BY GOD

Jacob was a man blessed by God in many ways. He prospered, with flocks and herds of great size. Also, he had twelve sons to increase his household and help him in the management of his property. The ten older sons guided the livestock to food and water throughout wide expanses of territory in Palestine.

Joseph, one of the younger sons, was given a favored position by his father. His duties included taking messages between his father and his brothers. At times he would report to his father the actions of the older sons. Of course they strongly objected to this and began to dislike him very much. Then, when he told them of some strange dreams, their dislike turned to hate.

It may be that God had given Joseph a special ability in connection with dreams. Later it would be evident that his own dreams did have meaning and that God would open to him the meaning of other dreams as well.

Joseph dreamed that he was with his brothers, setting up sheaves in the harvest field. The sheaf of Joseph stood up tall and straight. The sheaves of his brothers fell over, as in obeisance, bowing to
the sheaf of Joseph. Then he dreamed that the sun, moon, and eleven stars made obeisance to him. He told his dreams to his family.

“What is this?” cried his brothers. “He means that we should bow down to him? Joseph thinks he is greater than we and our father thinks he is dearer than we.” They envied and hated him. Finally they planned to kill him.

We can see in this account a great weakness of mankind which originally brought sin into the world. Joseph repeated his dreams in a way that revealed pride. His brothers had pride in their hearts, too. They

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could not bear the idea of bowing to a younger brother. Their pride turned to envy and hate and led them to thoughts of murder.

Joseph and his brothers were all human beings, as we are. Their actions show that the condition of sin is in the human heart. When people act on their own, without guidance from God, they find themselves in trouble.

**FOR YOU TO DO**

Complete the following sentences using one or a few words for each.

1. The human weakness shown by Joseph was

2. Human weaknesses shown by Joseph’s brothers were

3. All human weakness comes from the condition of
4 Troubles and problems always follow when men

As always, God was merciful and compassionate. He cared for the family of Jacob. For the ten who

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planned the evil deed, He had mercy and kept them from doing murder. For Joseph, He had mercy and preserved his life. For the family He had mercy and provided a way for the future.

God shows His mercy to people, but we learn from the lives of the prophets that He must always judge evil. He must bring people to recognize sin and its results. We find in the account of Joseph this truth repeated. Sin brought trouble, but God provided deliverance.

Although he showed the human weakness of pride, Joseph was a person who had faith in God and served Him well. God allowed him to suffer, not to punish him, but to bring him closer to Himself. Also He wanted Joseph to grow strong and wise for the work that was to come. Joseph went into the pasture not knowing his brothers planned to kill him.

“Let’s not kill him,” said the oldest brother, the one responsible for him. “We can throw him into the well.” They stripped off his shirt to smear it with blood, so Jacob would believe a wolf had eaten him. They threw him into the empty well.
But then a band of traders came by. “Why not sell him as a slave?” one suggested. “That way we can get him out of our lives and make some profit, too.” So they pulled him out and sold him for a paltry price. He was taken away into Egypt.

Joseph did not go into Egypt alone. God was there with him, caring for him and guiding him. His life was not to be ruled by some chance destiny over which there was no control. He was conscious that God’s care and love were similar to a father’s concern for his son.

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Even though other people treated him as a slave, he felt this close relationship with God. God would not forget him. God had preserved his life for a purpose. He did this by directing circumstances to bring about His will. Now Joseph knew that all circumstances of his life could be trusted to the wisdom and compassion of God.

FOR YOU TO DO

5 Circle the letters which indicate correct answers. In order to preserve Joseph, God worked through the following:

a) a sympathetic brother.
b) Joseph’s cry for help.
c) desire for profit.
d) an empty well.
e) a band of traders.
A SLAVE OBEYS GOD’S WILL

What a change came into Joseph’s way of life! He had been a favored son, sold for a small price. Since he was considered young and without experience, he was not worth even the full price of a slave. His dreams were far away now. Instead of a place of honor, he had a place of servitude. Great discouragement could have come over him. He could have been bitter and wished for revenge.

But we read in the accounts of his life that although his pride turned to humility, he did not show despair. He did not express anger toward his brothers. He did not question the ways of God. In his heart he seemed to realize that God has purposes that are not always understood by men. Often He uses unpleasant experiences to bring blessings.

At first things went quite well for Joseph. He was sold to a rich Egyptian officer. He did his work well and kept a pleasant attitude. The officer recognized his abilities and put him in charge of his business. God blessed his work, so that great prosperity came to his master.

Then suddenly he faced a real test of his character. The master’s wife tried to seduce him. In a bold and wicked way she tempted him, saying, “Come, take me. Come to my bed.”

“No,” Joseph declared, pulling away from her quickly, “not only would that be a wrong against
your husband; it would be a sin against God.” In such a moment of great testing, Joseph sought refuge in the Lord, for he knew well that wrongdoers never prosper. Joseph was of the righteous. The officer’s wife was determined to have her way with Joseph. She found another opportunity to force herself upon him, clutching at his clothing and offering him her body. He pulled away from her but she would not let go. She tore his shirt off him from behind as he dashed out the door. Joseph was of the righteous.

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The woman cried out in fury and began to accuse Joseph. She showed the garment to her husband saying, “He tried to force himself upon me, but I screamed. He ran away, leaving his shirt in my hands.”

6 Fill in the blanks.

Joseph demonstrated his faith and his devotion to God in the following ways:

a although pride had been in his heart before, now he showed an attitude of b His brothers were cruel to him, but he did not seek c He could not understand God’s purpose, but he did not d When faced with a great temptation he refused to Although he was completely innocent, Joseph was put in prison. Still, he did not complain nor question God. He felt in his heart that God had a purpose in these events. His submission was not to some unfortunate destiny over which he had no
control. No. His submission was to God, in faith. He knew God.

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cared about him and would guide him in the way that was best.

Joseph made the same impression in prison that he had in the officer’s home. It was evident to everyone that he was capable and intelligent, with faith in the one true God.

It happened that the king’s chief butler and chief baker both were put into the same prison where Joseph was. In one night they each had a disturbing dream.

“I wish there were someone to interpret these dreams,” said the butler.

“Interpretations belong to God,” said Joseph. “If you tell me your dreams it may be that God will reveal to me their meanings.”

“In my dream I saw three branches with ripe grapes bursting forth,” said the butler. “I pressed the Juice into the king’s cup and put it into his hand.”

“In my dream I carried on my head three baskets,” said the baker. “Birds swooped down and ate the bread from the one on top.”

Joseph explained that the three branches and the three baskets represented three days. In three days the butler would be restored to his work in the king’s service, but the baker would be hanged.
“Please remember me when you are in the king’s house,” Joseph said to the butler. “I am here on a false charge. I would like an opportunity to get my case before the king. Please mention me to him.”

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On the third day the baker was hanged, just as Joseph had predicted from the dream, and the butter took his place again in the service of the king. But Joseph was forgotten. That is, he was forgotten by the butter! But God had better plans for his faithful servant. God does not forget.

FOR YOU TO DO

7 Following are some statements of truths which we can learn from the life of Joseph. Select a word from the list to fill each blank. Then circle the letter in front of the statements which you believe apply to your own life.

resist  God  experiences
Satan’s  faithful  circumstances
chanceblessings

a  God may use unpleasant to bring us b  God will help us overcome temptations, but we must C

With God’s help we can be in any d  we must be submissive, not to but to 64 We Hear From The Prophets

A BROTHER SHOWS GOD’S LOVE
Joseph spent two more years in the prison. It would seem to us a waste of his youth and ability. But God was working, as He had in the lives of Noah and Abraham. He planned to make Joseph a blessing to many others besides Himself. He planned that the events of Joseph’s life would help to reveal to mankind the nature and purpose of God.

We notice now that Joseph, like Noah and Abraham, had been surrounded by the results of sin. The cruelty of his brothers, the humiliation of slavery in a strange land, the temptations of Satan, the lies and the prison—all these put Joseph in a hopeless condition. But God cared about him. Only God had the power to deliver him. In order to receive deliverance Joseph had to have faith in God and submit to God’s will. He chose God’s way and expressed his choice in obedience.

Again a dream becomes important in Joseph’s life. This time it is the king of Egypt who dreams. He saw in his dream seven cows, sleek and fat coming out of the river. Then seven other cows, thin and ugly, came out of the river and ate up the fat cows.

Also he dreamed that seven healthy heads of grain were growing on one stalk. Seven thin, ugly heads sprouted and swallowed up the good ones.

The king was so troubled by the dreams that he could not forget them. He was sure that they had a special meaning. He sent for magicians and
counselors to give him the interpretation, but none of them could

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... do so. Finally the chief butler remembered Joseph. “Bring him to me,” cried the king. “I must know the meaning of my dreams.”

Joseph was brought from the prison. He explained to the king that he had no magic powers. “I cannot do it,” Joseph declared, “but God can do it.”

So God revealed to Joseph the meaning and Joseph explained it to the King.

“The seven fat cows and the seven good heads of grain represent seven good years. There will be great plenty. Every harvest will be more abundant than usual. The lean cows and the bad grain represent seven bad years. There will be a terrible famine, with starvation throughout the land.”

God gave Joseph not only the interpretation of the dreams, but also wisdom to advise the king. “What you need,” said Joseph, “is a good manager. Let him work out a plan for the collection and preservation of food during the good years. Then when the famine comes there will be food for everyone in Egypt.”

The king was pleased. He saw that Joseph was guided by God. “Your wisdom comes from God,” he declared, “therefore there is no one wiser than you.” So he made Joseph ruler over all the land, to work directly under the king and prepare for the
years of famine. Joseph had been faithful and obedient as a slave. Now God would give him an opportunity to prove his character as a man of wealth and power.

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FOR YOU TO DO

8 Read the following statements. If a statement is TRUE, circle the letter. If it is FALSE, write the correction on separate paper.

a Joseph was forced to waste many years in prison.

b Joseph’s experiences were used by God for his personal benefit only.

c Joseph could interpret dreams because he was wise.

d Joseph’s life demonstrates God’s concern for people.

e Joseph’s life demonstrates God’s power to deliver us from sin.

What had happened was possible only because God was directing events. One day Joseph was a foreigner and a slave in prison. The next he was in the position of a ruler.

Some people might be proud and vengeful if they were given honor and power in this way. But we find that Joseph accepted God’s plan with humility. He expressed his submission to God by showing love to others.
The seven good years went by. The barns of Egypt were bulging with grain from the abundant harvests. Then came the famine. Soon people from great distances were coming to buy food from the stores Joseph managed. One day he looked up from his business and saw his ten brothers among those who came for food.

What would you have done? How would you have treated those who had plotted your death, thrown you into a well, and sold you as a slave into a strange country? Would you want to punish them? Get revenge?

Joseph did not even think of it. His life was in the hands of God.

The compassion of God was a force inside him. There was no room for proud or vengeful thoughts.

The brothers did not recognize Joseph. He decided to test them by pretending to accuse the youngest one of robbery. They all came to the defense of their brother and offered to pay the penalty for his crime.

This proved to Joseph that they had repented of their former sins and had changed their ways. So he revealed himself to them. “See, I am Joseph,” he said, “God sent me ahead of you to preserve your lives by a great deliverance. Hurry back now and bring the entire family. I want to honor my father.
and provide for him in the manner that a son should.”

So Joseph arranged for the family to be brought to Egypt where he prepared a home for them. He saw that they had respected positions and the best land. They were grateful to him and bowed down before him.

The dreams of Joseph had come true! But now he felt no pride in the humiliation of his family. He did not receive their gestures as a haughty ruler would. He knew that everything had been planned by God to save His people. Joseph was a loving brother and son. He knew that his life had been used to illustrate how God delivers the helpless, provides in all circumstances for those who trust Him, and forgives His wayward children when they call upon His name.

FOR YOU TO DO

9 It is clear that when we study the life of a prophet we learn principles which we can apply to our own lives. Two of these principles are given here. Can you add others which are important to you personally?

a  God cares about me.

b  God will guide me if I trust Him.

c

d

e
PRAYER

Oh God, Protecting Friend of Joseph, Knower of all things and wisest among the wise. Teach me to find refuge in You during all circumstances and difficulties. Help me at all times to display those qualities of personal character that are most pleasing to You. May I not question the experiences of my pilgrimage here on earth, but may I learn to completely surrender my life unto Your perfect Wisdom. For You, and You alone, are the Lord of my life. As you helped Joseph, may You also be pleased to help me so that my words and actions might continually reflect obedience, humility, and compassion for others around me.

Amen.

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CHECK YOUR ANSWERS

5 a a sympathetic brother.
   c desire for profit.
   d an empty well.
   e a band of traders.

1 pride.

6 a humility.
   b revenge.
   C question God.
   d sin against God.
2 pride, envy, and hate.

7  a  experiences, blessings.
   b  Satan’s, resist.
   C  faithful, circumstances.
   d  chance, God.

3 sin.

8 a False. His time was not wasted in prison.
   b False. His experiences were used to bless and teach others as well.
   C False. Mi interpretations belong to God.
   d True.
   C True.

4 act on their own and fall to obey God

9 Your personal answers.

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LESSON TEST

As you prepare to take this lesson test, please locate the STUDENT REPORT ANSWER SHEET in the back of your study guide for Lesson 3. Be sure to record your answers for multiple choice and true-false items in the spaces provided for them.

If your answer to each of the following questions is

YES, blacken space A.

NO, blacken space B.
1 Have you carefully read Lesson 3?

2 Have you completed all the *For You to Do* sections in this lesson?

3 Have you checked the answers you gave in the *For You to Do* sections with those at the end of the lesson?

4 Have you reviewed the lesson objectives to see if you are able to do what they suggest?

5 Have you reviewed the material before taking this lesson test?

**MULTIPLE CHOICE**

6 Joseph’s pride and his brothers’ envy show that
   a) man has no means to overcome sin.
   b) people are the helpless victims of evil.
   c) the condition of sin is in the human heart.

7 As Joseph reviewed his past life and the circumstances leading to his captivity, he could see that
   a) God had preserved his life for a purpose.
   b) he was the victim of fate.
   c) one’s dreams of future success rarely come true.

8 The story of Joseph teaches us that to trust God means to
a) surrender hope and accept the dictates of fate.

b) resign ourselves to circumstances and give up hope of restoration.

c) accept fully His provisions for our life.

9 Joseph’s experiences teach us that

a) the lessons of life often waste precious years.

b) testing benefits only the one being tested.

c) God often works through one person to bless many.

10 Joseph might have become proud of his position and consumed by the idea of revenge except for

a) his strong sense of self-discipline.

b) the compassion of God which was inside him.

c) his sense of duty which helped him overcome such feelings.

TRUE OR FALSE

11 God allowed Joseph to suffer in order to bring him closer to Himself and to prepare him for the work that was to come.

12 As we review the events of Joseph’s life, we conclude that he was the victim of chance.
13 Joseph’s life shows that when temptations come our way little can be done to resist or overcome them.

14 God used Joseph’s experiences for the ultimate benefit of many people.

FILL IN

15 We see God’s care and provision for His people in the example of Joseph’s life, in which God directed to bring about His will.

16 Joseph’s submissive attitude in the service of a rich Egyptian officer shows that his pride had changed to humility and was an indication that he accepted without question the will of God.

17 Even though he had been the victim of his brothers’ hatred, Joseph did not seek 18 Joseph’s attitude and industriousness which were evident in the prison as they were in the officer’s home demonstrated both and to God.

19 God often uses difficult to bring blessings to His people.

20 Joseph’s response to his brothers who had treated him so badly showed that he understood God’s purposes and accepted God’s