

Personal Bible Study

Joseph

GENESIS 37–50

1. Read Genesis 37:1–11. What three reasons do you find in these verses for Joseph's brothers' hatred and jealousy toward him?

† Genesis 37:2: *Joseph brought back a bad report about their behavior after being out in the fields with them.*

† Genesis 37:4: *Their father loved Joseph more than all of them which likely showed itself in the work assignments, meal seating, provision, and attention, not to mention the robe that indicated he would be the leader of the family.*

† Genesis 37:5–11: *Joseph told them about a dream he had in which it was obvious that he expected he would rule over them and they would bow down to him.*

2. Read Genesis 37:12–36. In what ways do Joseph's brothers show great callousness and cruelty?

They mocked him by called him "this dreamer" and conspired with each other to kill him. They were callous toward their father by planning to kill his beloved son and lie to him about how it happened. They were physically brutal to Joseph stripping him of his clothes and throwing him into the pit, and they were callous to sit down to eat while ignoring his cries for help. Judah may have been motivated by compassion when he suggested selling

Joseph to Midianite traders instead of killing him. They showed great callousness to their father as they watched him weep and mourn, not telling him that Joseph was really alive.

*Who are those Midianite? They are the children of Abraham with Keturah. In the time of Moses the Midianites are first mentioned as having had a priest by the name of **Reuel** or **Jethro**, who became afterward **Moses' father-in-law**. Toward the close of the forty years' wandering of the children of Israel in the wilderness, the **Midianites were allied with the Moabites in the attempt to exterminate the Israelites**. For this reason Moses was ordered by God to punish the Midianites. Moses.*

3. Read Genesis 39:1–23. Although God never spoke directly to Joseph like he did to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we read eight times in this chapter that “the Lord” (using the personal covenant name for God) was with Joseph. Why might the narrator want to assure us that God was with Joseph in such a personal way?

Because we might assume that God had abandoned Joseph, thinking that God would not have allowed Joseph to suffer in this way if he was with Joseph. The narrator wants us to know that far from abandoning Joseph, God was actively at work in and through his life. He was at work granting Joseph favor in his master's sight, blessing his master's household for his sake, and instilling in Joseph a great fear of God and strength of character so that he could withstand tremendous, relentless temptation.

Because we might assume that Joseph should have been rewarded and blessed for his stand against temptation rather than punished for it, the

narrator specifically tells us that the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love in prison.

4. Read Genesis 40:1–22. How must it have encouraged Joseph when his interpretations of the dreams of the chief baker and chief cupbearer proved true?

Joseph was still holding on in faith that his dreams of his family would one day come true. So when he also recognized that these two prisoners' dreams were from God, he interpreted them. When those interpretations came true, it must have encouraged him that he was not foolish to continue to believe that God would indeed bring his dreams to pass, even after eleven years of no signs of their coming true.

5. Read Genesis 41:1–45. How does it become obvious in this chapter that the Lord truly has been with Joseph?

In God's providence, Joseph was put in prison with someone who would end up having the Pharaoh's ear to suggest that Joseph could interpret Pharaoh's troubling dream. Then Joseph boldly stood before the Pharaoh who claimed to be a god and told him that the one true God would not only provide the meaning of his dream, but God would bring it about, that it was "fixed by God" (v. 32). God also gave Joseph great wisdom to know what plan to suggest and great ability to carry out that wise plan. Only God could have lifted him from the lowest place of being an imprisoned foreign slave to riding in a chariot in Egypt, second in command to Pharaoh, in a single day.

6. Read Genesis 41: 46–56. Note the names Joseph gave to his two sons born in Egypt. What do they reveal about how God has worked in him throughout his years of slavery and imprisonment?

† Manasseh: *“God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father’s house.” God had been at work in Joseph’s heart, giving him hope for the future rather than an obsession about his past hurts.*

† Ephraim: *“For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.” God had been at work in Joseph’s life, generating the fruit of forgiveness and faith. And he had been at work through his life, making him a blessing to Potiphar’s household, the prison, Egypt, and eventually the entire world.*

7. While Joseph seems to have forgiven his brothers before they arrived in Egypt, he put them through a series of tests to see if they were still the same hardhearted men who sold him into slavery. What do the following verses reveal about changes in Joseph’s brothers?

u Genesis 42:18–28 *Rather than being cold and calloused, they named what they did to Joseph as sin and recognized that they were deserving of punishment for what they did to him.*

u Genesis 42:29–43:10 *Rather than being willing to go along with the lie that brought his father so much sorrow when they told him Joseph was dead, Reuben was desperate to assure his father that he would not lose Benjamin. And rather than being greedy and willing to sell his brother, Judah was willing to pledge his own life for the safety of his brother.*

u Genesis 43:11–34 *Whereas the brothers had allowed the favoritism shown to Joseph to drive them to murder, they were “merry” when*

great favoritism was shown to Benjamin as he was given five times the amount of food they were given in the middle of a famine.

- u Genesis 44:1–34 *The brothers showed great anguish and grief at the possibility of leaving Benjamin behind in Egypt knowing how much pain it would bring to their father. They saw this as a sign of God exacting payment for their guilt in their dealings with Joseph. Judah went to great lengths to offer himself in place of Benjamin knowing that if Benjamin did not go home to his father, the grief would kill his father.*

8. In Genesis 45:1–15, we see the climax of the story as Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. Note that Joseph repeated three times that God had sent him there. How could he say to his brothers “You sold me here” (45:5) and also “It was not you who sent me here, but God” (45:8)?

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While Joseph’s brothers were responsible in human terms for his being sold as a slave into Egypt, Joseph was confident that God was at work in this evil to accomplish his own good purposes. God worked his will through the everyday events of life directing all things to their appointed end.

- 9. At the very end of Genesis in chapter 50:19–20, Joseph repeated the theme of God’s sovereignty, which serves as a summary of his entire life, saying to his brothers, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” Explain in your own words what he means by this statement.

By selling him into slavery, Joseph’s brothers intended to harm Joseph. Joseph labeled their action and intent as clearly and completely evil. But God overruled their evil actions, using them to accomplish a purpose that neither Joseph nor his brothers could have fathomed. In this way, God brought good out of evil. Joseph learned that whatever happened to him personally, he was part of a larger purpose ordained by God that cannot be thwarted.

10. How does Joseph point to Christ? Look up the verses in the second column of the chart below, noting the ways Joseph foreshadowed Jesus.

Joseph	Christ
“Israel loved Joseph.” (Gen. 37:3)	Matt. 3:17 <i>Just as Joseph was dearly loved by his father, so was Jesus his Father’s beloved Son.</i>
“His brothers . . . hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.” (Gen. 37:4, 8)	John 1:11; 5:18; 7:5 <i>Just as Joseph’s brothers mocked Joseph’s dreams, so Jesus’s brothers didn’t believe him.</i> <i>And just as Joseph was hated for what he said,</i> <i>Jesus was hated and rejected for what he taught.</i>
“His brothers were jealous of him.” (Gen. 37:11)	Matt. 27:18 <i>Just as envy drove Joseph’s brothers to their murderous intentions, so was it envy</i>

	<i>that drove the religious leaders to demand Jesus be crucified.</i>
“They conspired against him to kill him.” (Gen. 37:18)	Matt. 12:15 <i>Just as Joseph’s brother conspired to kill him, so the Pharisees conspired to kill Jesus.</i>

“They stripped him of his robe.” (Gen. 37:23)	Matt. 27:28 <i>Just as Joseph’s brothers cruelly stripped Joseph of his robe, so Jesus was stripped of his clothes when he was arrested.</i>
“They . . . threw him into a pit. . . . They . . . lifted him out of the pit.” (Gen. 37:24, 28)	Matt. 12:41; Mark 16:6 <i>Just as Joseph was thrown into a pit and raised from out of the pit alive, Jesus was “in the heart of the earth” and emerged from the tomb alive.</i>
Joseph served as a slave. (Gen. 39:1)	Phil. 2:6–7 <i>Just as Joseph went from being a beloved son in his father’s house to the degradation of slavery in Egypt, Jesus left the glory of his father’s home in heaven to take the form of a servant.</i>
Joseph was falsely accused. (Gen. 39:14–18)	Matt. 26:59–60 <i>Just as Joseph was falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife, Jesus was accused by false witnesses.</i>
Joseph’s “feet were hurt with fetters; his neck was put in a collar of iron.” (Ps. 105:18)	Matt. 27:28–30; John 19:1–2 <i>Just as the innocent Joseph suffered significantly in captivity, so was an innocent Christ subjected to intense physical suffering at the hands of his captors.</i>

Joseph was exalted over all Egypt. (Gen. 41:39, 40)	Phil. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:22 <i>Just as Joseph emerged from prison and was put in charge of all things in the land, Jesus emerged from the grave and ascended into heaven where he is highly exalted and has been given authority over all things.</i>
“Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, ‘Go to Joseph.’ . . . All the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain.” (Gen. 41:55, 57)	John 1:16; 6:35; Acts 4:12 <i>While people from all the earth were sent to Joseph to buy grain and be saved from physical starvation, all people must come to Jesus who is the bread of life to be saved from spiritual starvation.</i>
Joseph forgave his brothers for their cruelty to him. (Gen. 45:5)	Luke 23:34 <i>Jesus asked God to forgive those who cruelly put him on the cross.</i>
Joseph said, “It was not you who sent me here, but God.” (Gen. 45:8)	Isa. 53:4; Acts 2:23; 4:27–28 <i>Just as God was accomplishing his saving purposes through the evil done to Joseph by his brothers, so God accomplished his saving purposes through the evil done to Jesus in the crucifixion.</i>