

Journey Into Victorious Living

LESSON 10 . . . Requirements for Victorious Living (Genesis 47:1-31)



NOTES

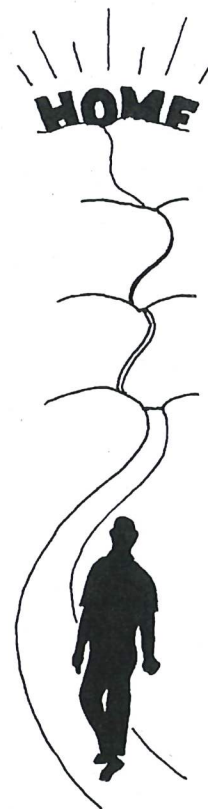
Now in Egypt, Jacob's family totals seventy (46:27). Joseph tentatively settles them in the land of Goshen, also known as *Rameses* (47:11). Then, he takes five of his brothers to introduce them to Pharaoh (47:2). Wanting to know how they might best fit into his country's economy, Pharaoh first asks their occupation. They truthfully reply they are *shepherds* (47:3). The brothers also tell Pharaoh they have come to Egypt because the famine in their land is severe and they have no pasture for their flocks. Then, they ask permission to live permanently in the land of Goshen. Not only does Pharaoh grant their request, but he also puts Joseph's brothers in charge of his own livestock (47:4-6). After settling his family in Goshen, Joseph brings his aged father to meet the powerful Pharaoh. In this chapter, we find **three** requirements for victorious living . . .

Annihilate expectations of an easy life (47:7-12).

Joseph introduces his father to Pharaoh, and then his father blesses Pharaoh (47:7). The word translated *blessed* (BĀRAK, baw-rak') means to salute or congratulate. In this context, it refers to a very respectful greeting. The Pharaoh then respectfully asks Jacob, *How old art thou?* (47:8). Pharaoh asks his age because Jacob is obviously a very old man, and in the ancient Near East old age was seen as a sign of divine favor. Therefore, aged people were treated very respectfully. What does God command us in Leviticus 19:32a?

Jacob tells Pharaoh the years of his *pilgrimage* are 130 (47:9). In other words, Jacob understands he is a pilgrim. What is a "pilgrim"? It is someone on a long, difficult journey. That's what we all are—pilgrims. Therefore, we have what command in 1 Peter 2:11?

Jacob also tells Pharaoh his life has been *evil*, or difficult, and shorter than his fathers (47:9). His father Isaac lived to be 180 (35:28) and his grandfather Abraham lived to be 175 (25:7). So, compared to them, his years have been *few*. The patriarchs lived unusually long lives.



Although Jacob's life was comparatively short, it was difficult. Nowhere in the Bible does God promise us an easy life. Can you name one person in the Bible whom the Lord called to live an easy life? Did Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, John the Baptist, Jesus, or Paul? Anyone? To the contrary, what does Psalm 90:10 tell us?

God is very honest with us in the Bible because He doesn't want us to follow Him under false pretenses. God doesn't promise our pilgrimage will be easy, but He tells us not to fear or be dismayed (Isa. 41:10a-b). Why, according to Isaiah 41:10c-d?

Jacob's life has been difficult, but he will live in Egypt for seventeen peaceful, happy years before he dies at the age of 147 (47:28).

As Jacob leaves from his visit, he again blesses Pharaoh. Having formally received Pharaoh's approval, Joseph officially settles his family in the land of Goshen, or *Rameses*, and provides them with ample food (47:10-12).

To live victoriously, **annihilate expectations of an easy life** and . . .

Eliminate tax fraud (47:13-26).

The famine continues to worsen because no food is being produced in the land. Joseph sold the stored food until the Egyptians ran out of money. Then, Joseph tells them if they have no money, he will give them food in exchange for their livestock. The next year they exchange their land for food, and Joseph thus acquires all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh (47:13-20).

Joseph gives the people seed to sow the land, with the stipulation that a *fifth* of the harvest be given to Pharaoh (47:23-24). The people understand that for the nation to survive, Joseph has to rule with an iron hand. Therefore, what do they say in Genesis 47:25?

Since the land now belongs to Pharaoh, Joseph makes a law that Pharaoh will receive a *fifth* of the harvest from the land, with the exception of the

land belonging to the Egyptian priests (47:26). This plan actually was a percentage income tax system to finance government and is still a model today. In the matter of taxes, we as believers must always remember what command in Romans 13:7a-c?

The word *tribute* probably refers to income or property taxes. The word *custom* refers to taxes paid on goods or merchandise, such as sales tax.

Sadly, research has shown that Christians are just as likely as non-believers to cheat on their taxes. I have heard Christians, even pastors, brag about how they cheat on their taxes by making deceitful deductions or not reporting all their income. That is just bragging about sin, because it violates what command of the Lord Jesus in Mark 12:17b?

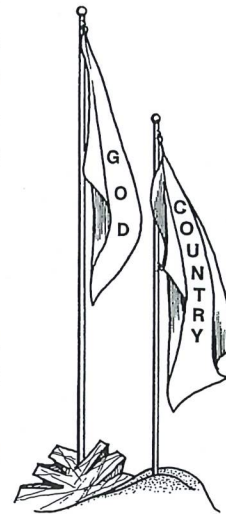
We are to submit to every authority, such as emperors or kings, instituted by God. According to the Bible, the purpose of government is to protect and punish. It is to **protect** its citizens from criminals and national enemies, and it is to **punish** evil doers, or criminals. It is also to commend those who do right (1 Pet. 2:13-14).

To live victoriously, **annihilate expectations of an easy life, eliminate tax fraud**, and . . .

Anticipate death as a time of rest (47:27-31).

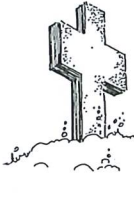
After reporting Joseph's handling of the famine, the story returns to the history of Israel and the Israelites. They peacefully settle in Goshen, where they multiply greatly (47:27). Jacob's family rapidly becomes a great nation as God promised his grandfather Abraham. After living in Egypt for seventeen years, Jacob died around 1859 B.C. at the age of 147 (47:28). Knowing death is near, Jacob calls his son Joseph and asks him to promise he will not bury him in Egypt (47:29). What does he tell Joseph in Genesis 47:30a-b?

Joseph tells Jacob he will do as he asks (47:30c). Jacob's request is not a sentimental or superstitious request. It is an act of faith. Jacob believes that although his family is in Egypt and doing very well there, one day God



will take them back to the Promised Land and make them a great nation there.

After asking Joseph to bury him in the Promised Land, Israel bows in worship *upon the bed's head* (47:31). This verse is difficult to translate with certainty. The word translated *bowed* (SHĀḤĀ, shaw-khaw') also can be translated "bow in worship." It is translated "worship" 99 times and "bow" 31 times in the Old Testament. Also, the word translated *bed's* can also be translated "staff." I think the verse is best translated "bows in worship on the head of his bed."



When do we most need our faith? When it is time to die! At that point, we look back on our lives and realize God has never failed us, never left us, and never given up on us. It is the time when we most need faith in what promise in Psalm 23:4a-c?

Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said he wanted to die before the Rapture because he didn't want to miss the Christian experience of death. He wanted to experience what it is like to walk through *the shadow of death* into eternal life.

The word Jacob uses to describe his death is *lie* (SHĀKAB, shaw-kab'), which means to rest or lie down in sleep. The euphemism most often used in the Bible for death is "sleep." In John 11:11b, how does Jesus describe the death of Lazarus to His disciples?

When teaching about the Resurrection, Paul refers to death as *sleep* or being *asleep* (1 Cor. 15:6, 18, 20 & 51). For a believer, death is simply going to sleep in one place and waking up in another. In the book of Revelation, John writes that the *Spirit* says those who die in the Lord are *blessed* (Rev. 14:13a). Then, what does the Spirit say in Revelation 14:13d-e?

Three **requirements for victorious living** are . . .

Annihilate expectations of an easy life,
Eliminate tax fraud, and
Anticipate death as a time of rest.

Journey Into Victorious Living

LESSON 11 . . . Leaving a Lasting Legacy (Genesis 48:1-22)



NOTES

Joseph's family is now settled in the fertile land of Goshen. In the previous chapter, we learned Jacob sent for Joseph because he knew his life was quickly coming to an end. He requested to be buried with his *ancestors* in the Promised Land. However, Jacob does not die immediately, and as prime minister of Egypt, Joseph has responsibilities that would not allow him to stay with his father. Later, when word again comes that his father is ill, Joseph takes his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to see his dying father (48:1). From this episode in Jacob's life, we find **three** ways we can leave lasting legacies for our children and grandchildren . . .

Arrange a time to give them a blessing (48:1-7).

When Jacob, who is bedridden, hears Joseph has arrived, he gathers his strength and sits up in bed to greet him. Then, Jacob tells Joseph about how God appeared to him in *Luz* (48:3). What did Jacob rename *Luz* (Genesis 28:19)?

There God promised to multiply Jacob's descendants, giving them the land of Canaan, the Promised Land, for *an everlasting possession* (48:4). The point of repeating the promise is to let Joseph and his sons know they are heirs to the promise.

Jacob tells Joseph he is adopting his two grandsons, Manasseh and Ephraim, as his sons. This means Joseph's descendants will get double representation among the tribes of Israel. This explains how Ephraim and Manasseh come to have equal standing with Joseph's brothers and why Joseph did not become the head of a tribe bearing his name. The tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim later become two of the most important tribes of Israel. An important leader of the Israelites, originally named *Oshea the son of Nun*, would come from the tribe of Ephraim (Num. 13:8). Who is this *son of Nun* (Numbers 27:18)?

Jacob then tells Joseph that children born to him in the future will inherit land within the territories of Ephraim and Manasseh. This means they will be incorporated into those two tribes. Apparently, seeing Joseph and his sons prompts Jacob to briefly recount the death of Rachel, their mother and grandmother, who died in Canaan giving birth to Benjamin. Jacob tells them he buried her beside the road to Bethlehem (48:6-7).

To leave a lasting legacy for your children and grandchildren, **arrange a time to give them a blessing** and . . .

Allow them to hear you pray for them (48:8-16).

Jacob's aging eyes can barely see Joseph's two boys, so he asks if they belong to Joseph. Joseph responds: *They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place* (48:8-9). Here is a very important principle: our children are given to us by God. Although it may sometimes seem like they are ours for an eternity, after they grow up and leave home, it seems like such a very short time. Because God has given our children to us, we should never treat them like they are a burden or intrusion into our lives. Instead, our love and care for them should teach them what truth found in Psalm 127:3a?

Jacob tells Joseph to bring his sons to him so he might bless them. Israel kisses and embraces them and says to Joseph: *I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed* (48:9b-11). This is an example of what promise found in Ephesians 3:20a?

Joseph takes his two sons from their grandfather's knees and bows down before him (48:12). This is a tremendous act of humility. Joseph, the prime minister of Egypt and second most powerful man in the world, is bowing down before the patriarch of a clan of sheep herders who are so low on the social scale they are despised by the Egyptians (43:32 & 46:34).

Joseph positions the boys so Ephraim is at Jacob's left hand and Manasseh at his right hand. The chief blessing was given with the right hand; therefore, Joseph places them so Jacob could simply put his right hand on Manasseh, the oldest. However, Jacob knowingly crosses his arms as he reaches out to lay his hands on the boys' heads. So, his right hand is on the head of Ephraim, the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, the older (48:13-14).

Jacob begins his blessing to Joseph and his grandsons by saying: *God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk* (48:15b). Then, what does Jacob say (48:15c)?

The word *fed* (RĀ 'Ā, raw-aw') refers to a shepherd feeding and caring for

his sheep. This is the first time in the Bible God is pictured as a shepherd; and how fitting it is as the old shepherd Jacob is dying. Jacob's words are reminiscent of what statement in Psalm 23:1?



Jacob continues his blessing, which is contained in a prayer. He asks God to *bless the lads* and make them *grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth* (48:16). One of the greatest legacies we can leave our children or grandchildren is letting them hear us pray for them. I remember as a young boy staying with my grandparents and sleeping in a room next to my granddad, Newt Haddock. He was very ill in his later years. In those days, we didn't have box springs—just a set of bare, squeaky springs under the mattress. I can still hear those springs squeak as my grandfather would get out of his bed, get down on his knees, and pray before he went to sleep. I can still remember the words he prayed. It is a wonderful legacy.

Many years later, Samuel was priest, prophet, and judge over the twelve tribes of Israel. In his farewell speech, what does he say to the Israelites (1 Samuel 12:23a)?

Samuel's words indicate it is a *sin* against God not to pray for people, and in no area is this more sinful than our own families.

To leave your children and grandchildren a lasting legacy, **arrange a time to give them a blessing, allow them to hear you pray for them**, and . . .

Assure them of God's continued faithfulness (48:17-22).

When Joseph sees his father put his right hand on Ephraim's head, he lifts it to place it on Manasseh's head. However, Jacob refuses and tells Joseph he knows what he is doing. Then, he tells Joseph that Manasseh will become a *great* people, but Ephraim will become even *greater* and *his seed shall become a multitude of nations* (48:17-19). Somehow, on his death bed, God gives Jacob a prophetic glimpse into the future of his descendants. Jacob's prediction is verified later when the tribe of Ephraim becomes the leading tribe of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, being superior to the tribe of Manasseh (1 Kings 12). In the Old Testament, God often uses the younger son—Moses was younger than Aaron and Jacob was younger than Esau. Israel then says he is dying (48:21a). What else does he say in the rest of that verse?

This is a wonderful message to all of us who will one day have to leave our children and loved ones behind. The same God who has been our shepherd will *be with* our children and grandchildren when we leave this world. Our great example is when it came time for our Lord to die and leave His disciples behind. Jesus prayed that God would *keep them from the evil* (Jn 17:15). Jesus knew there was only one way to protect His followers *from the evil*. Therefore, what does He pray in John 17:17?

When it comes time for us to leave this world, the best way to know our loved ones will continue in the will of God and under His protection is to teach them to revere, study, and obey God's Word. We should also teach them how important it is to attend a church that reveres the Bible and does not retreat from its truths.



Finally, Jacob says to Joseph: *Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow* (48:22). This is the only mention of this incident in the Bible. The word translated *portion* (SHEKEM, shek-em') is probably a word play on the town of Shechem, where Jacob dug a well and where Joseph will later be buried (Josh. 24:32). Shechem is also called Sychar (Jn 4:5). There at Jacob's well (Jn 4:6) about 1,800 years later Jesus meets a woman who has had five husbands and is living with a man to whom she is not married. Jesus leads her to faith and gives us one of the most important statements in the Bible—John 4:24. Write it below:

Before we die, we all have an obligation to leave our children a lasting legacy. This should be a solemn time when we sit down with our children and grandchildren to bestow God's blessing on their lives. It should include an emphasis on the fact God always keeps His promises. We should also express our desire that they be faithful to the God who has been our Shepherd all our lives.

To leave your children and grandchildren a lasting legacy, **arrange a time to give them a blessing, allow them to hear you pray for them, and assure them of God's continued faithfulness.**

Journey Into Victorious Living

LESSON 12 . . . When You Are Gathered to Your People (Genesis 49:1-33)



NOTES

Just before Moses died, God took him to the top of Mount Pisgah to show him the land He promised to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then, Moses died (Deut. 34:1-5). In the same way, God took Jacob to a spiritual mountaintop just before his death to show him the future of his descendants. Therefore, Jacob calls his sons together to tell them what will happen to them in the days to come (49:1). In this passage, we find **two** things we should do when we are gathered to our people . . .

Trust in God's providence (49:2-27).

The word "providence" denotes the wisdom, care, and guidance of God. As Jacob is dying, we see his faith in God's providence regarding his descendants. Jacob speaks first about his firstborn *Reuben* (49:3). He praises Reuben, who at one time was the apple of his eye. But Reuben forfeited his privileges as the firstborn. Therefore, what does Jacob say to him in Genesis 49:4a-b?

The word *unstable* means uncontrolled or given to passions or impulse. Jacob explains: *because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it . . .* (49:4). This is a reference to Reuben's adultery with Bilhah, the maidservant of Rachel (29:29 & 35:22). When Rachel failed to bear children to her husband Jacob, she gave Bilhah to him as a wife. Bilhah became the mother of Dan and Naphtali (30:3-8).

Reuben did not lose his place as a member of the family, but he lost his reward. This can also happen to Christians. Like precious metals melted by fire so the impurities will come to the surface, our lives will be judged and the quality of our works will be *revealed by fire* (1 Cor. 3:13). If our works don't pass the test, what does 1 Corinthians 3:15 tell us?

For some believers, judgment will be like waking up in the middle of the night to find their home engulfed in flames. They will flee to safety but watch the possessions of a lifetime go up in flames. However, that person, if he or she is a true believer, *shall be saved*.



God takes a hard line on sin, especially sexual sins. Reuben apparently confessed his sin and was forgiven. However, he still had to live with the consequences of his sin, the most serious of which was losing the rewards of the firstborn. Throughout the history of the nation of Israel, not one prophet, judge, or king would come from the tribe of Reuben. His tribe did not furnish one national leader; therefore, as Jacob predicted, Reuben did *not excel*, or was not first (Gen. 49:4b).

Next in age are *Simeon and Levi*, who should have been in line for the blessings of the firstborn. However, they are grouped together because they are men of *cruelty* (49:5). Out of revenge for the rape of their sister Dinah, they committed the atrocious act of slaughtering the Shechemites (34:25-29). Because *their anger was fierce* and they reacted with *cruel* vengeance, what does God say through Jacob in Genesis 49:7c?

This means they will not possess their own land. This is seen in the fact that the tribe of Simeon disappears from the biblical record after the conquest of the Promised Land and is assimilated into the tribe of Judah (Josh. 19:1). Because of God's grace, the consequences for the tribe of Levi turned into a blessing. Moses comes from the tribe of Levi. During the golden calf incident, Moses stands at the entrance of the camp and says, *Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me* (Ex 32:26b). Who is the first to come (Exodus 32:26c)?

Consequently, God chose the tribe of Levi to become the priestly tribe. Though they did not receive an inheritance in the land, being chosen as the priestly tribe was nonetheless a great honor.

Next, Jacob comes to son number four, *Judah* (49:8). The most important thing God says through Jacob concerning Judah is: *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah* (49:10a). This clearly refers to the Messiah. Therefore, what does Hebrews 7:14a tell us?



Genesis 49:11-12 is a prediction of great material wealth that will come to the tribe of Judah. This is fulfilled in the lives of King David and Solomon, two of the richest people to ever live. Solomon says about his wealth: *I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces* (Ecc. 2:8a). That means his personal wealth

would match that of entire countries. Solomon was also the wisest man to live, prior to the coming of Christ. He gives us a gold mine of advice about personal finances in *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes*. For example, what does he say about money in *Ecclesiastes* 5:10a-b?

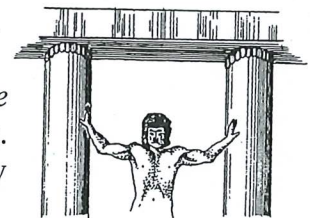
Jacob tells *Zebulun* his descendants will be enriched by sea trade (49:13). The land allotted to Zebulun under Joshua was between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea (Josh. 19:10-16), though it did not actually border the shore of either.

When Jacob comes to *Issachar* he calls him a *strong* donkey. This means his descendants will work like animals for other people; they will be a tribe of low achievers. This tribe was not prominent in the history of Israel.

Concerning *Dan*, Jacob says he will *judge his people* (49:16). The most famous descendant of Dan was a judge. What was his name (Judges 13:24a)?

This descendant of Dan ruled Israel for twenty years. He was a bold, wise judge who clearly had God's hand on his life. The Bible records that *the Spirit of the LORD* came upon him in power three times (Judg. 14:6, 19 & 15:14). Yet, Samson is remembered more for his weakness for a woman than for his great qualities. However, God still honors this descendant of Dan by including him in the heroes of faith (Heb. 11:32).

Jacob tells *Gad* they will be attacked in the Promised Land but will defeat their enemies (49:19). He tells *Asher* their land will be productive and provide food fit for a king (49:20). This tribe settled along the fertile northern coast of Canaan. *Naphtali* would be like a *hind* [doe] *let loose* (49:21a), which could mean they would be a free mountain people (Judg. 5:18b). Little is known about this tribe, so the fulfillment of this prophecy is very sketchy.



Jacob's prophecy about *Joseph* is the longest (49:22-26). The predicted blessings are many, but a significant one is that of *blessings of the breasts, and of the womb* (49:25). This means great leaders would come through his two sons. As already mentioned, the most famous, Joshua, came from the tribe of Ephraim (Num. 13:8 & 14:6a). Others to come through the tribe of Ephraim are Deborah and Samuel. Gideon would come through the tribe of Manasseh.

Finally, Jacob comes to *Benjamin*, whom he compares to a ravenous *wolf* who catches its prey in the morning and then enjoys it at night (49:27). In its early history, this was a violent tribe (Judg. 20). The first king of Israel, Saul, came from the tribe of Benjamin (1 Sam. 9:1-2). Benjamin's most famous descendant is the apostle Paul (Philip. 3:5c).

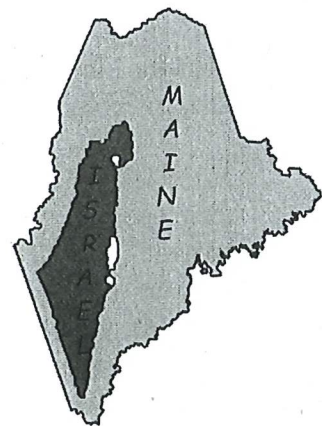
When you are gathered to your people, remember to **trust in God's providence** and . . .

Trust in God's promises (49:28-33).

Finally, Jacob says to his sons: *I am to be gathered unto my people* (49:29b). What a beautiful way to anticipate death—going to be with all the believers who have died before us! As Jacob is about to die, he is a wonderful example of what description of faith found in Hebrews 11:1?

Jacob then asks to be buried with his *fathers*, Abraham and Isaac, in the cave located in Canaan (49:29c-30). This again reveals Jacob's faith that God would keep His promise about the land. Then, at age 147 (47:28), using his last ounce of strength, the old shepherd pulls his feet back into the bed, breathes his last breath, and is *gathered unto his people* (49:33).

Jacob had his faults, but in the end he died with genuine faith. Though Jacob has been dead for more than 3,500 years, God reminds us of his life every day as we read the newspaper or hear the evening news. A country less than half the size of the state of Maine gets more press per square acre than any other country on the planet. It bears the name God gave to Jacob. *Israel!* Each time we hear that name, we are reminded God always keeps His promises. When Joshua, a descendant of Ephraim, is near death, he reminds Israel's leaders of something they know with all their *hearts* and *souls*. What is it (Joshua 23:14b)?



Every time you see or hear the name *Israel* in the news, God is reminding you of that truth. Therefore, **when you are gathered to your people**, don't forget to **trust in God's providence** and **trust in God's promises**.

Journey Into Victorious Living

LESSON 13 . . . Profiting From Your Problems (Genesis 50:1-26)



NOTES

We can all profit from our problems if we respond to them properly. Instead of asking God “why,” we often should ask “what.” Instead of asking, “God, WHY are you allowing this to happen,” we should ask, “God, WHAT are you trying to teach me through this?”

In the previous chapter, God took Jacob to a spiritual mountaintop, revealing to him the future of his descendants. When Jacob finished sharing his prophecies with his sons, he was *gathered unto his people* (49:33). Now, in this final chapter, we find **three** principles for profiting from our problems . . .

Grieve hopefully (50:1-14).

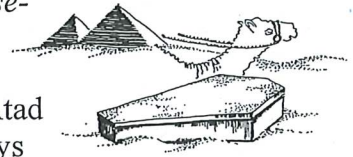
When Joseph’s beloved father dies, he falls on his father, weeping and kissing him (50:1). Joseph is a wonderful example of the fact that shedding tears at the death of a loved one doesn’t reveal emotional weakness or a lack of faith. Tears just reveal we love as God would have us. We should never prevent people from weeping in grief because tears help vent our grief and maintain emotional health. That’s why there is *a time to weep* (Eccles. 3:4). However, as we grieve, we must remember what fact found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13c?



Joseph orders his physicians to embalm his father—an Egyptian process that took forty days. The Egyptians mourned for Jacob seventy days (50:2-3). The seventy days included the forty-day embalming process and thirty days of Hebrew mourning (Num. 20:29 & Deut. 34:8). Then, keeping his promise to his father, Joseph makes what special request of the Pharaoh (Genesis 50:5)?

With Pharaoh’s permission, Joseph arranges one of the most spectacular and detailed funeral processions recorded in the Bible. Pharaoh knows Egypt owes much to the father of the man who saved Egypt from starvation; therefore, Jacob cannot be buried as a common man. The procession includes Egyptian senior dignitaries, Joseph’s family, Jacob’s other sons,

and the entire household of Jacob. There were also *chariots and horsemen*. All this made up a very large, impressive entourage (50:7-9).



When the journey is almost complete, the procession sets up camp at Atad (Ay'-tad) on the east side of the Jordan River. After another seven days of mourning, Jacob's sons carry his body into the land of Canaan and bury him in the cave with Abraham and Isaac, as he requested (49:29). Then Joseph, his brothers, and the procession return to Egypt (50:10-14).

In this passage we learn a healthy grieving process takes time. We should not postpone the grieving process because refraining from grief keeps emotional wounds open and prolongs the pain. However, in the midst of our grief, we should remember what promise in Psalm 62:8?

To profit from your problems, **grieve hopefully** and . . .

Live lovingly (50:15-21).

With their father gone, the brothers now fear Joseph will take revenge on them. They know Joseph's deep love for his father would not allow him to take revenge on them earlier, for fear of sending Jacob to an early grave. Now that Jacob is dead, they send a messenger to the powerful Joseph, asking him to forgive their sins against him. When Joseph receives the message, he weeps (50:15-17). This makes six times the book of Genesis records that Joseph weeps.

All Joseph has done for his brothers seems to be in vain because they think he was merely postponing his revenge until Jacob died. Joseph's pure heart is seen in the fact his heart is broken because his brothers think he harbors ill feelings toward them. The same should be true of us. It should break our hearts that anyone would feel we harbor feelings of bitterness, hatred, revenge, or any other malicious feelings toward them.

In fear, Joseph's brothers come and fall down before him and tell him they are his *servants* (50:18). The ones who sold him into slavery are now offering to become his slaves. This reminds us of what principle found in Proverbs 11:8?

The brothers certainly have reason to fear because they are guilty of a diabolical act against Joseph. However, Joseph cannot bear the thought of his brothers fearing him. Therefore, he tells them twice not to be afraid

(50:19a & 21a). He also asks them if he is *in the place of God* to judge and punish them (50:19b). In other words, Joseph understands vengeance belongs to the Lord (Rom. 12:19). To let his brothers know he hasn't forgotten the evil thing they did to him, Joseph says, *ye thought evil against me*. However, what else does he say in Genesis 50:20?

This statement reveals what enabled Joseph to endure years of injustice, cruelty, and problems. We will never be able to profit from our problems unless we believe God has a good purpose for all our problems (Rom. 8:28). If we don't believe that, we will never be able to forgive and **live lovingly** with everyone.

One reason God allows us to have problems is to mature us. Joseph became prime minister of Egypt at the age of thirty (41:46). What caused Joseph to be mature enough to become the second most powerful man in the world at such a young age? It was his problems—the same process that God uses to mature us. James tells us the testing of our *faith* develops *patience* (Jas. 1:3). Then, when *patience*, or endurance, has its full effect we will be *perfect* [mature] *and entire, wanting nothing* needed to serve God (Jas. 1:4).

The two most important words in Genesis 50:20 are *but God*. Looking at the use of the phrase *but God* in the Bible would make a great sermon series or Bible study. Besides Genesis 50:20, another great *but God* verse is comforting when it comes our time to die—Psalm 49:15. Write it below:

The Bible teaches we are all sinners, destined for eternal damnation. However, another *but God* verse gives us what good news (Romans 5:8)?

If we are to profit from our problems, we can never forget one of the most important phrases in the Bible: *but God*. God has a purpose for every problem He allows us to have. When the purpose seems to elude us, we must remember what Jesus said to His disciples the night before His crucifixion. What did He tell them in John 13:7b?



To profit from problems, **grieve hopefully, live lovingly**, and . . .

Die confidently (50:22-26).

Joseph lives in Egypt about fifty years after Jacob's death, to the age of 110 years. He lives to see his great-great-grandchildren by Ephraim and his great-grandchildren by Manasseh (50:22-23). Joseph tells his brothers he will soon die (50:24a). Then, what does he tell them in Genesis 50:24b?

Joseph was taken to Egypt when he was seventeen years old and now he is 110, so he has lived in Egypt for ninety-three years. Though scientifically, architecturally, and militarily advanced, Egypt was spiritually depraved. It was a polytheistic culture that worshipped gods in the form of the sun, the Nile River, animals, and even insects. The worship of some of their gods included sex orgies. As prime minister, Joseph was no doubt under intense pressure to conform to, or at least approve of, that culture. Therefore, for ninety-three years he has longed to go home. His dying words confirm his great faith in Jehovah and His promises.

Like his father Jacob, Joseph requests his *bones* be taken to the Promised Land. However, unlike his father, Joseph asks that his bones remain in Egypt until God brings all of Israel out of Egypt. Joseph then dies, is embalmed, and placed in a coffin in Egypt (50:25-26). Some 360 years later, Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt. What does Exodus 13:19a record?

The book of Joshua ends with the burial of Joseph's bones (Josh. 24:32). Victorious living is exciting, but what makes it exciting? It is the problems and tragedies of life that God turns into victories. How is a "journey into victorious living" summed up in 1 John 5:4b?



I am sure in heaven Joseph says "amen" every time that verse is read or quoted. To profit from your problems: **grieve hopefully, live lovingly**, and **die confidently**.