

# Journey Into Victorious Living

## LESSON 4 . . . Getting the Most Out of Life (Genesis 41:1-57)



### NOTES

**W**e do not know how long Joseph was kept in prison, but we do know he was there for two years after he interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's chief butler and baker (41:1). For two long, uneventful years in prison Joseph waits on the Lord. Why? Peter says we should *rejoice* when we experience *manifold temptations*, or trials, because they reveal the genuineness of our faith, which is of greater value than gold that will some day perish. When our faith remains strong through trials, it results in *praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ* (1 Pet. 1:6-7).

Joseph's time in prison was not pleasant. Even though he was in charge of running the affairs of the prison, he was still a prisoner—unable to come and go as he pleased. His life in prison was much different than that of Pharaoh's butler and baker, whom Joseph was assigned to serve. Psalm 105 tells us about Joseph's imprisonment, release, and rise to power. What does verse 18 tell us about his imprisonment?

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After two long years, the Lord causes Pharaoh to have two dreams. In the first, Pharaoh is standing on the bank of the Nile River. Seven fat, healthy cows suddenly come out of the river and start grazing on the river bank. Then, seven ill-looking, malnourished cows come out of the river and eat the fat ones. After this, Pharaoh wakes up (41:1-4).

He falls back asleep and has another dream in which he sees seven heads of grain on one stalk with each head well-formed and plump. Seven more heads, shriveled and withered, suddenly appear on the stalk. They swallow up the plump heads of grain, and again Pharaoh wakes up (41:5-7). When Pharaoh can find no one to interpret his dreams, his butler remembers—guess who? Joseph! Therefore, he tells Pharaoh about Joseph and his ability to interpret dreams (41:8-13). Why did all this happen? How does Proverbs 21:1 answer this question?

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In the events that follow, we learn **two** actions we must take to get the most out of life. We must **plan** and **ban**.

## Plan for the future (41:14-36).

After hearing the testimony of his chief butler, Pharaoh sends for Joseph. Joseph shaves, changes his clothes, and goes to stand before Pharaoh. Pharaoh tells Joseph he has heard he can interpret dreams (41:14-15). Joseph tells Pharaoh: *It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace* (41:16). Joseph makes it clear God *shall* give him the ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. This is an example of what principle found in 1 Corinthians 10:31 by which we are to live?

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Like Joseph, whatever gifts or talents we have come from God. Therefore, if we are skilled at sports, math, music, computers, politics, teaching, etc., we should use our gifts and talents for *the glory of God*.

Pharaoh then tells Joseph about his two dreams concerning the cows and stalks of grain (41:17-24). Joseph explains the two dreams have the same meaning. There will be seven years of *plenty* followed by seven years of *famine*. He also tells Pharaoh the reason he had two dreams with the same meaning is God has decreed these events will happen soon. Joseph then suggests Pharaoh find the wisest man in the land and put him in charge of a nationwide program of storing twenty percent of the food produced during the seven good years. This plan would provide enough food for the seven years of famine (41:29-36).



Many verses in the book of Proverbs teach us that planning ahead is part of being wise. For example, we are told to consider the ways of the ant (Prov. 6:6). According to Proverbs 6:8, what are we to learn from the ant?

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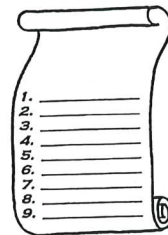
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Like ants, we should plan for the future in our finances, careers, retirement, etc. We should also plan our schedules so we can spend time with our spouses, kids, and grandkids.

To get the most out of life, **plan for the future** and . . .

## Ban the pain of the past (41:37-57).

Pharaoh is so impressed with Joseph's plan, he appoints him to be in charge of the entire land of Egypt. Then, he places his *ring* on Joseph's finger. This *ring* was used to make an impression in soft clay or wax of





Pharaoh's seal on official documents. It gives Joseph the power and authority of Pharaoh. He also provides Joseph with new clothes and a gold chain for his neck. In addition, Pharaoh has Joseph ride in his second chariot so people will pay homage to him. Finally, he gives Joseph an Egyptian name and a wife from the prestigious, priestly family of *On*. Pharaoh is making his best effort to "egyptianize" Joseph. Joseph is now *thirty years old*, so thirteen years have passed since his brothers sold him into slavery. God used these years of adversity to accelerate Joseph's maturity and hone his character (41:37-46).

Adversity accelerates our spiritual growth. Joseph's problems were not a chain of events generated by bad luck. The pit, Potiphar's wife, and the prison were all part of God's plan for developing Joseph's character. Why did God allow Joseph to become a slave and a prisoner before elevating him to become the second most powerful man in the world? How does Jesus explain why in Luke 16:10a?

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Joseph was faithful as a slave and a prisoner, so no doubt he will be faithful as prime minister of the most powerful nation on earth. The next seven years produce so much grain that storage bins are overflowing, because the grain was like the sand of the sea. Joseph wisely stores the grain in various cities throughout Egypt so it will be accessible to everyone in the land (41:47-49).



Before the years of famine arrive, Joseph has two sons to whom he gives Hebrew names, revealing his faith in Jehovah God to keep His promises. He names his firstborn son *Manasseh*, which means "forget." Joseph chooses this name because he is willing to forget the wrongs he had suffered and the misery of being separated from his family (41:51). Does this mean Joseph has forgotten the pit, Potiphar's wife, and the prison? Has he forgotten the betrayal, the false accusations, the humiliation, and the loneliness? No! He could never forget all those things, but he chooses to forget the pain and refuses to harbor any bitterness or hatred in his heart toward anyone.

Joseph is able to do this because he knows two things. First, you can't change the past. Second, it is God's place to avenge. Joseph didn't have a Bible, so he could not have read this verse. Yet, because he knows God's heart, he also knows God's words found in Romans 12:19c. Write them below:

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We must remember it is impossible to enjoy our present blessings if we are unwilling to forget past pain and hurt.

Joseph names his second son *Ephraim* (41:52), which means “doubly fruitful.” Joseph knows no one can be fruitful until they are willing to forgive. Forgive first, and then God can bless your life. You cannot be happy in the present, no matter what your blessings, unless you are willing to forget past pain and forgive those responsible.

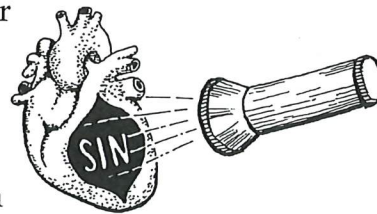
When the seven years of abundant harvest end, the seven bad years arrive, and they are very severe. The famine even extends outside the borders of Egypt to other countries who have not prepared for it. Therefore, bordering countries come to buy grain in Egypt (41:53-57). God is setting the stage for the next episode of Joseph’s life. Joseph teaches us the truth that **getting the most out of life** comes from a willingness to forgive. He is a wonderful example of what promise in Psalm 106:3?

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Joseph did what was righteous when he willingly forgot the pain of the past. After I graduated from high school, I worked at a gas station in Cad-do, Oklahoma. During this time, I learned many valuable things about working with the public. At closing time each evening, the owner would carefully check the cash register tape for the recorded sales of the day, mark it, and then file it away. The register kept a running total of the gallons of gasoline sold that day, as well as the money put into the drawer. The last thing we did each night before closing was push the “clear” button. Then, we could begin the next day fresh and undistracted by the previous day’s transactions.

Forgetting the pain of the past is like that. We have to “clear” our mental register of past transactions, which include hurts that will result in bitterness and even hatred if carried over. Sometimes the hurtful transactions are hidden in our hearts because we have ignored them so long. Therefore, we must pray: *Search me, O God, and know my heart* (Psa. 139:23a). Then, we need to pray what prayer found in Psalm 139:24?



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**Getting the most out of life** requires we **plan** and **ban**: plan for the future and ban the pain of the past.



# Journey Into Victorious Living

## LESSON 5 . . . Maintaining a Clear Conscience (Genesis 42:1-38)



### NOTES

**H**ave you ever done something wrong and then your conscience made you miserable? Not having a clear conscience is very troubling. That's why we need to know how to maintain a clear conscience.

Because of Joseph's God-given ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, he was elevated to prime minister of Egypt. He is now in a position to sell grain to countries surrounding Egypt (41:57). Therefore, the scene moves from Egypt to Canaan, where there is also severe famine. When Jacob, Joseph's father, learns there is food in Egypt, he sends his sons to buy grain so they will not starve. However, he does not send his youngest son, Benjamin, because he does not want to risk losing his only other son by his beloved wife Rachel (42:1-5). This famine has set into motion a chain of events that fulfill God's purpose for Joseph's trials. Joseph's brothers will soon discover what truth found in Proverbs 19:21?

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In this passage, we find **three** requirements for **maintaining a clear conscience** . . .

### **Allow God time to change people (42:6-24a).**

When Joseph's brothers arrive in Egypt, they stand in line to buy food directly from Joseph (42:6). The direct contact with Joseph is part of God's providence because they could have purchased grain in many other cities (41:48-49). Joseph was sold into slavery at age seventeen and was a slave and prisoner for thirteen years. It is now at least two years into the famine; so, it has been about twenty years since his brothers have seen him.



If you have ever been to a twenty-year high school reunion, you know how much people can change in twenty years. It is then you may be glad God didn't answer all your prayers. Joseph's appearance has changed tremendously, not to mention his speech and clothing are now Egyptian. When the brothers come before Joseph, what does Genesis 42:6c record?

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This is a fulfillment of Joseph's dream recorded in Genesis 37:9-10. Imagine what must have gone through Joseph's mind when he recognizes his

cruel brothers. He now has the perfect opportunity to get even. He could refuse to sell them grain or even have them immediately executed. However, Joseph decides to test them to see if they have changed. Therefore, he pretends he doesn't know them and speaks harshly to them. He asks where they are from, and they say they are from Canaan and need to buy food. Joseph's brothers do not recognize him because he has changed and is speaking through an interpreter (42:23). Next, Joseph accuses them of spying for Egypt's enemies to see where Egypt is vulnerable to attack (42:7-9). His brothers vehemently deny being spies and tell him they are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. Then, what do they tell him in Genesis 42:13b?

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Joseph now has all the information he needs to continue with his plan to analyze their hearts. He tells them he still believes they are spies, but for proof of their claims, he demands one of them go get their youngest brother while the other brothers are kept in prison. He then takes them all into custody for three days (42:14-17).

Joseph knows nothing reveals our true character like the condition of our conscience. If his brothers repeat their sin, then they are hopelessly evil. However, if at great possible peril to themselves they protect their youngest brother, Joseph will know they have changed.

Joseph is impressing upon them the extent of his awesome power over them. His plan is designed to reveal their real attitude toward Benjamin, his only full brother. After they spend three days in his custody, he revises his plan. He tells them only one of them will be kept in prison while the rest go home and return with their youngest brother so their story can be verified (42:19-20). It is important to note that as they discuss their dilemma, what do they think is the cause of their peril? They believe they are being punished for what they did to Joseph. Now, the oldest, Reuben, says: *Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold, also his blood is required* (42:22).

Because Joseph always speaks to them through an interpreter, they do not know he understands what they are saying in Hebrew (42:23). When he hears his brothers struggling with their consciences and their belief that God is punishing them for what they did to him, Joseph cannot contain his emotions. Therefore, what does he do (42:24a)?

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He is releasing twenty years of hurt, pain, loneliness, homesickness, etc. The Bible records six times that Joseph weeps, sometimes uncontrollably, (42:24; 43:30; 45:2, 14; 50:1, 17). Tears are often a sign of strength and



righteousness. A weaker man would have immediately ordered punishment or even execution of his brothers. Also, Joseph weeps because he wants things right in his family. He doesn't want any animosity. The story of Joseph's shedding many tears is an example of what truth in Psalm 126:5?

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To maintain a clear conscience, before reacting to a hurt or injustice, **allow God time to change people** and . . .

### **Always listen to your conscience (42:24b-28).**

To hide his forgiving and loving heart, Joseph returns to his brothers and has Simeon tied up before their eyes (42:24b). This strikes fear in their hearts. It is all part of Joseph's plan to test his brothers and bring his family back together.

Next, Joseph gives orders for their sacks to be filled with grain and to hide their payment for the grain in their sacks. The brothers load their donkeys and head for home. However, when they stop for the night, one of them opens his sack to feed his donkey and discovers the money. When he tells his brothers, their hearts sink in terror (42:25-28c). Then, what do they say in the last sentence of Genesis 42:28?

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This is the first time any of Joseph's brothers have mentioned the name of God. This is a breakthrough because they are admitting God would someday, somehow, punish them for their sin of selling Joseph into slavery. Now, circumstances are causing their consciences to condemn them. Sometimes God uses or arranges circumstances to arouse our consciences.

One of God's greatest gifts to us is a conscience. At the church in Corinth, some believers were encouraging other believers to eat food that had been sacrificed to pagan idols. There was nothing wrong with eating the food or refusing to eat it. The issue was conscience. Therefore, what does Paul write to the believers who encouraged other believers to go against their consciences (1 Corinthians 8:12)?

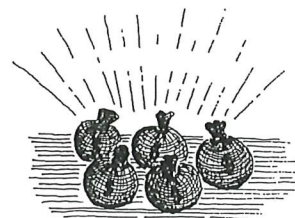
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It is a *sin* to encourage anyone to do anything that goes against his or her conscience. It is also a sin to violate our own consciences.

To maintain a clear conscience, **allow God time to change people, always listen to your conscience**, and . . .

### **Avoid searing your conscience (42:29-38).**

Upon arriving in Canaan, the nine brothers tell their father Jacob all that has happened. To complicate matters further, when they empty their sacks, each sack has money in it. When Jacob and his sons see the money, they are frightened as they think about the consequences of stealing from the prime minister of Egypt (42:29-35).



What would they do now? If they return to Egypt, they will be considered thieves. If they take Benjamin with them, what will happen to him? It appears Jacob has some suspicions about his sons because he says: *Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me* (42:36). Reuben seeks to calm his father's fears by offering to give his own two sons to him until he brings Benjamin back. However, Jacob doesn't want to risk losing his only remaining son of his beloved wife Rachel. To lose him, Jacob says, will bring him to his grave in sorrow (42:37-38). God is clearly using Jacob's words to amplify the voice of conscience in his sons.

God often uses circumstances and people to increase the volume of the voice of our consciences. We must be very careful about turning a deaf ear to our consciences because it is possible to mute what they are saying. How does 1 Timothy 4:2b describe people who have done this?

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The word translated *seared* (KAUSTĒRIAZŌ, kow-tay-ree-od'-zo) is the word from which we get our word "cauterize." It means to seal a wound or destroy infected tissue with a hot instrument. This procedure leaves scar tissue that is insensitive. When used in reference to our conscience, *seared* means to lose sensitivity to right and wrong. Our conscience is the voice of our soul telling us God's way. It is a built-in "sin detector" God has given us. However, when we habitually ignore it, we develop a *seared* conscience. This is why we should always strive to be able to honestly say what words of Paul recorded in Acts 24:16?

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Joseph's brothers are examples of how God uses our consciences. If we fail to listen to our consciences, we will be doomed to repeat the same sins.

To maintain a clear conscience, **allow God time to change people, always listen to your conscience**, and **avoid searing your conscience**.



# Journey Into Victorious Living

## LESSON 6 . . . Living Worthy of Your Name (Genesis 43:1-34)



### NOTES

**N**ames in the Bible are very important; that's why God often changes the names of great saints. As followers of Jesus Christ, our name is "Christian," so our lives should bring honor and respect to that name. That's why Philippians 1:27a gives us what command?

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In chapter 42, we saw Joseph's brothers come to Egypt to buy grain. To analyze their hearts and consciences, Joseph devised a plan that included treating them harshly, jailing Simeon, and sending the other brothers back to Canaan to bring Benjamin to Egypt. In this chapter, we find **three** principles that will help us live worthy of the name "Christian."

### Reflect on who God is (43:1-14).

God has been working on Joseph's brothers' consciences. However, there is no record of them admitting what they had done to Joseph. Perhaps now that they have food and are away from their problems in Egypt, they will return to business as usual. Perhaps, in spite of everything, they still believe they can cover up their sin. However, if they had had a Bible, what spiritual truth in Proverbs 28:13 might convince them otherwise?

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The famine continues to be severe in Canaan, and they eat all the food they had purchased in Egypt. Therefore, Jacob tells his sons to go back to Egypt to buy more food. Judah reminds him they must have Benjamin with them in order to purchase food. Jacob doesn't want to send Benjamin, so he scolds Judah for telling the Egyptian official he has another brother. Judah explains they were just answering questions and had no idea the official would want them to bring their brother back. Finally, Judah convinces Jacob to allow Benjamin to go to Egypt with his brothers (43:1-10).

In an attempt to appease the official and assure the return of his sons, Jacob tells his sons to take back some of the best produce in Canaan. They are to take the best fruits, honey, spices, myrrh, nuts, etc. Then, he tells them to

take double the money that was put in their sacks because it might have been *an oversight* (43:11-12).

It is important to note which of Jacob's names is used in chapters 42 and 43. After God changed Abram's name to "Abraham," he was never called "Abram" again. However, after Jacob's name is changed to *Israel*, which means "God rules," he is often called *Jacob*. In chapter 42, he is called *Jacob* five times (42:1, 4, 29, & 36) but never by his new name. This is because even after God changed his name to *Israel*, he stills acts like the old *Jacob*, being weak in faith.



But, in chapter 43, he is called *Israel* three times (43:6, 8, & 11) and never *Jacob*. This is because he is finally acting worthy of his new name *Israel*. This is revealed through what statement Jacob makes in Genesis 43:14a?

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Israel calls God "EL SHADDAI," which means *God Almighty*. Israel is acknowledging God's power and, therefore, living up to his new name. He then reveals he is willing to accept whatever God's will is by saying: *If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved* (43:14c).

Besides working in the hearts of Israel's sons, God is also working in the life of Israel, trying to get him to live in a manner worthy of his new name. Through "famines" of various kinds, including our finances, our health, our relationships, etc., God tries to get us to live up to our new name, "Christian." How does Ephesians 4:1b express this fact?

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We have been called to live up to the name "Christian." From time to time, we all must ask ourselves, "Am I living worthy of my new name?" If we are not, then we need to remember God is EL SHADDAI, *God Almighty*, and if we act in faith, He will empower us to live up to our name.

To live worthy of your name, **reflect on who God is** and . . .

### **Relate your faith to others (43:15-25).**

With Israel's approval, his sons take the gifts, money, and Benjamin back to Egypt. When Joseph sees Benjamin, he orders they be taken to his house and a feast prepared. Not knowing Joseph's intentions, his brothers are frightened because they think he is taking them as slaves and confiscating their donkeys (43:15-18). This would mean their family would starve.



Trying to discover what is going on and fearing they will be accused of stealing the money, they decide to “come clean.” When they arrive at the entrance of the house, the brothers tell Joseph’s *steward* (the man in charge of his household) about finding the money in their sacks. They tell him they are returning all the money, plus money to buy more food. Knowing Joseph’s plan, the steward tells them everything is alright and not to be afraid (43:19-23a). Then, in Genesis 43:23b-c, what does the steward, an Egyptian, tell them?

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The steward calls God ELOHIM (ELŌHĪM, el-oh-heem’), making it clear Joseph has been sharing his faith with his steward. Sometimes our greatest opportunity to be witnesses who live up to our name is during times of adversity. Perhaps the steward saw that in spite of all the injustices and mistreatment Joseph had endured, there was no bitterness or revenge in his heart. Though Joseph didn’t have a Bible, he knew God’s heart; therefore, he knew God’s will. Joseph’s steward could see him as a wonderful example of what command found in Colossians 3:13?

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Next, the steward brings Simeon out to them, takes them into Joseph’s house, and gives them water to wash their feet, as well as feed for their donkeys. When they are told they are going to eat lunch with Joseph, they prepare their gifts for Joseph’s noon arrival (43:24-25).

To live worthy of your name, **reflect on who God is, relate your faith to others,** and . . .

### **React in love (43:26-34).**

We now come to one of the most moving passages in the Bible. As Joseph comes into the house, his brothers present him with the gifts they have brought and bow down before him. Joseph asks them how they are doing (43:26-27a) and then he asks something that has been weighing heavy on his heart. What does he ask in Genesis 43:27b-c?

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They tell him their father is doing well. Then, Joseph sees his only full brother, Benjamin, and asks if this is their younger brother. They verify



this is Benjamin. Deeply moved and unable to fight back the tears, Joseph hurries out of the room to find a place to weep. In spite of his great faith and moral strength, Joseph is a man who often cries. Tears are not a sign of weakness but an indication we feel and love as God would have us. Victorious living sometimes includes weeping over broken relationships, the lost, etc. What does David write in Psalm 56:8?

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David is confident God is recording his tears. Isn't it great to know God counts every tear we shed when we are hurt and when we are moved because of compassion or love.

After a while, Joseph washes his face to freshen up and returns to his brothers. Following Egyptian custom, Joseph eats at a separate table because it was not acceptable for Egyptians to eat with Hebrews, who were considered to be of very low status and *an abomination*, or disgusting, (43:31-32).

The brothers are astonished at their seating arrangement because they realize they are seated by age, from the oldest to the youngest. Also, the youngest, Benjamin is served portions five times larger than his brothers (43:33-34). Joseph is being partial to Benjamin to see his brothers' reaction. It was Jacob's partiality to Joseph, along with Joseph's dreams, that caused his brothers to sell him into slavery. Now, Joseph's brothers are having an unbelievable feast—unlike any they have had in years because of the famine, or perhaps ever.

This feast is reminiscent of what happens when we react to being hurt in a way consistent with victorious living. Paul mentions all kinds of adversity we must endure, including *tribulation . . . persecution . . . famine* and the *sword* (martyrdom) that try to separate us from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:35). Then, what does he write in Romans 8:37?

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What does it mean to be **more** than a conqueror? A conqueror defeats his enemy. Being more than a conqueror is doing something more impressive—making your enemy your friend. That's victorious living!

**Living worthy of your name** requires that you **reflect on who God is, relate your faith to others, and react in love.**



# Journey Into Victorious Living

## LESSON 7 . . . Three Purposes for Our Problems (Genesis 44:1-34)



### NOTES

**T**here is a saying that goes: "Trouble never leaves us like it finds us." Our troubles and problems always change us but in different ways. Problems cause some people to become more spiritual and others more sinister. As someone has said, "Christians are like teabags. You can't tell what's in them until they get in some hot water."

Previously in our study, Joseph's brothers have returned to Egypt with their brother Benjamin to purchase food. When they arrived, Joseph prepared a feast for them in his home, and chapter 43 ended as they were eating that meal. Now, Joseph will give his brothers the supreme test to see if they have really changed. From this passage, we can find **three purposes for our problems . . .**

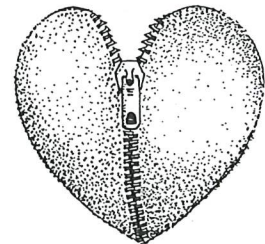
### 1. To test our character (44:1-13)

God has a reason for allowing our problems. After forty years of problems in the wilderness, the Israelites were on the verge of entering the Promised Land. Then, in Deuteronomy 8:2b, what does Moses tell them is the reason God allowed them to have all their wilderness problems?

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Joseph is testing his brothers to discover what is in their hearts. Therefore, once again he tells his steward to fill his brothers' sacks with food and put their money in each sack. Joseph also tells his steward to put his *silver cup* in Benjamin's sack (44:1-2). This cup was used by Egyptians for divination, or future telling. Joseph certainly didn't use the cup for that, but its significance would add to his brothers' terror when they are caught.

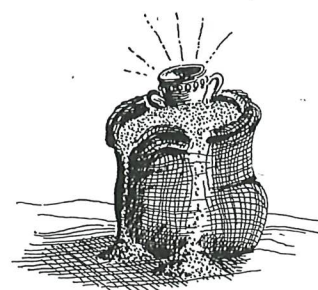


Early the next morning, his brothers leave for Canaan and Joseph's steward follows them. He overtakes them and, as ordered, accuses them of stealing the silver cup (44:3-6). They vehemently deny any wrongdoing. In haste, they add that if one of them has the cup, *let him die* and the rest of them will become slaves (44:7-9). This is an example of what truth found in Proverbs 29:20?

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The steward knows the penalty is too severe and will not fit into Joseph's plan, so he suggests only the offender be punished by becoming a slave and the others will be free to go. The steward then begins searching the sacks of food, beginning with Reuben, the oldest, going to the youngest. So, he searches the sacks of Reuben, then Simeon, then Levi, Judah, and so on. As each sack is searched, the brothers' confidence increases. Finally, the steward searches the sack of the youngest brother, Benjamin, and finds the cup. This discovery is their worst nightmare coming true; therefore, the brothers tear their clothes in grief (44:10-13a).



This is the same response their father had when Jacob saw Joseph's blood-stained coat (37:34). This is the first sign they have changed. Now, the question is, would they again abandon their father's favorite son? No! They load their donkeys and return to Egypt (44:13b). Just as they think things are getting better, they get much worse. They must be experiencing what feeling, as expressed by the psalmist in Psalm 22:14c-d?

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The purposes for our problems are to **test our character** and . . .

## **2. To initiate self-examination (44:14-17)**

When the brothers return to Egypt, they again bow before Joseph. Then, Joseph asks, *What deed is this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?* (44:15). Joseph certainly doesn't *divine*, or practice fortune-telling, because this is part of the occult. He is probably just trying to further frighten his brothers and make them stand in awe of him. Though the Law has not yet been given, Joseph clearly knows the heart and ways of God. Later, through Moses, God says His people are not to sacrifice their children in the fire like the pagans (Deut. 18:10a). Then, in Deuteronomy 18:10b, what does God say He doesn't want found among His people?

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Joseph's plot is working because Judah, speaking for his brothers, asks what they can do to prove their innocence. He then says to Joseph: *God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants* (44:16). This is the first time the brothers confess they are guilty of anything. Their problems are obviously causing them to examine their lives.

Judah says it is *God* (ELŌHĪM, El-oh-heem') who is uncovering their sin. However, acknowledging our sin, or even confessing it, is not enough. Our



sin must also be forsaken (Prov. 28:13). To forsake our sin means we will not do it anymore. The Bible calls this “repentance”—a change of mind that results in a change of behavior. To see if his brothers have truly come to repentance, Joseph must find out if they will repeat their sin or forsake it. He still can’t reveal who he is, but he duplicates the situation that had caused his brothers to sell him into slavery. Even though the brothers think they will all be slaves, Joseph says he wouldn’t do such a thing. Then, what does he tell his brothers in Genesis 44:17b-c?

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The stage is now perfectly set to see if his brothers would repeat their sin.

The purpose for our problems is **to test our character** and **to initiate self-examination**. If these two purposes are accomplished, the third purpose will result, which is . . .

### 3. To produce change (44:18-34)

We now come to one of the most touching passages in the Bible. Resigned to the fact they cannot prove their innocence, Judah—at great personal risk—comes near to Joseph. He then intercedes for Benjamin with one of the most moving and sincere pleas in the Bible. His petition reveals a clear change in his heart. Remember, it was Judah who suggested to his brothers that they sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites (37:26-27). Judah wanted to make money by getting rid of Joseph. At this point, all the brothers believe their problems are because of what they did to Joseph, and he is now dead (44:20).

Judah pleads for Benjamin’s release so he can go home. Three times in his moving plea he tells Joseph if Benjamin does not go home, their father will die from grief (44:22, 29 & 31). Judah also tells Joseph about his personal guarantee to his father that he would bring Benjamin back home. He recounts to Joseph that if he doesn’t bring Benjamin back, he will bear the blame before his father for the rest of his life (44:30-32). Judah is genuinely concerned about Benjamin and his father Israel. Then, Joseph hears the words for which he has been hoping and praying. Judah says something that reveals an undeniable change in his heart. What does he ask Joseph to do in Genesis 44:33?

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This is the moral high point in Judah’s life. Once before, Judah saw how the loss of one of his brothers broke his father’s heart (37:34-35), and he

cannot bear to see it happen again. He would rather be a slave for the rest of his life than bear the blame of repeating his father's grief (44:33-34).

His sacrificial offer is no doubt one reason God chose him for the ultimate honor of all the sons of Jacob. Later, his father Jacob will see Judah is the son through whom the Messiah would come. Therefore, just before he dies, what does Jacob say in Genesis 49:10?

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A scepter is a ceremonial rod, or wand, used as a symbol of a monarch's authority. Therefore, Israel knew the Kings of Kings and Lord of Lords would come through his son Judah.

Judah's willingness to suffer as a substitute for his brother foreshadowed the ultimate substitution of Christ on the cross dying for the sins of the world. In the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, John begins to weep when no one is found worthy to open the seven-sealed scroll. He weeps because the closing scene of history cannot come to God's appointed end. Then, one of the elders around the throne of God tells John to *weep not*. Why, according to Revelation 5:5b-c?

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This is the fulfillment of Jacob's prophecy about Judah (Gen. 49:10). God used problems **to produce change** in Judah so he would fit His divine purpose. He wants to use your problems to do the same.

When, not **if**, you have problems, remember these **three purposes for our problems**:

**To test our character,**  
**To initiate self-examination, and**  
**To produce change**