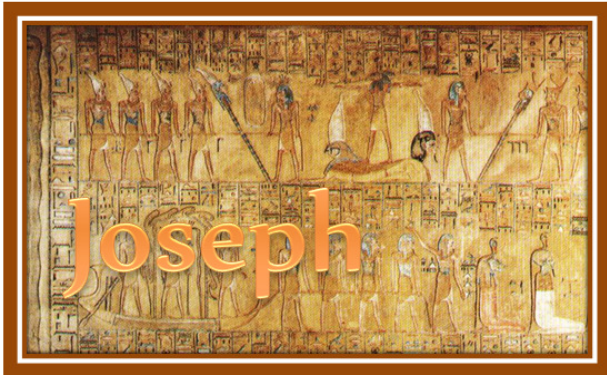




Who was that Hero in the Multi-Colored Coat? (Part II)

Genesis 45:5: (NASB) *Now, do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.*



Several weeks ago we began to tell the story of a hero - not the kind of hero that rises up in courage to do a deed that changes the outcome of an event - rather the kind of hero who lives his vision for a lifetime and changes the world as a result of his lifetime dedication. This hero is the Joseph of the Old Testament - dreamer, interpreter of dreams, man of wisdom, faith, integrity and mercy. Joseph was a true hero, the kind that appears only once in many generations. What can we learn from him?

First, a recap of the story so far
(Please refer to Part I in our archived programs at ChristianQuestions.com)

Chapter 1 - The Beginning: A Hero's Lesson in Motivation

The first lesson in living heroically: The contrast between a raging, one-sided rivalry consisting of ten brothers versus the younger, integrity-filled teenager who lived his loyalty and showed fearlessness when speaking truth, even if it could prove to his detriment.



The Hero's Choice:
THE MOTIVATION OF HATRED
OR
THE MOTIVATION OF INTEGRITY!

Chapter 2 - Being Sold by His Brothers, A Hero's Lesson of Choices, Determination and Consequence

The second lesson in living heroically: Courage that is founded in reason and obedience to the vision is destined for mockery and threats, yet it still perseveres.



The Hero's Choice:
ACT OUT OF THE
EMOTIONAL INSTABILITY
OF THE MOMENT
OR
FOLLOW THE VISION!

Chapter 3 - Joseph in Potiphar's House, A Hero's Lesson in Living with Sacred Honor

The third lesson in living heroically: All choices yield consequences, both intended and unintended. Living with sacred honor means accepting all consequences with grace and humility, even at the expense of reputation and future.



The Hero's Choice:
LIVE IN OBEDIENCE
TO YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES
OR
LIVE IN SACRED HONOR
TO THE VISION!



Joseph was being prepared for a great work in the future. He needed great preparation. He had the ability to continue to learn from his experiences and rise above them. It prepared him for bigger tests. What a great example for us to go through each day as a building block so, by God's grace, if we are faithful to our calling, He can put responsibility upon our shoulders.

Chapter 4 - Joseph Sent to Prison, A Hero's Lesson in Single-Minded Focus



The Hero's Choice:
BE SWALLOWED IN DESPAIR
BY MISFORTUNE
OR
NEVER FLINCH FROM
A SINGLE-MINDED FOCUS!

The fourth lesson in living heroically: The hero does good things for others and is forgotten. Again to the outsider it would seem as though God had all but left him. But, this is precisely how a lifetime hero is developed. Tested, tried and often alone, he shows his motivation by making the choice to live with sacred honor and a single-minded focus!

Joseph interpreted the cupbearers dream:

Genesis 40:14-15: (NASB) ¹⁴Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house. ¹⁵For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon.

Notice the attitude of his request - *do me a kindness*.

Genesis 40:23: (NASB) Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Joseph didn't whine that he was forgotten and that no one appreciated him.

Definition, *Jim Combs, What is a Hero*

- *We need more heroes today. We need them more now than ever before. A hero is someone who rises above their circumstances and leaves things better than they found them. Someone who is ordinary and does the extraordinary when there's a need.*

Joseph continued to make the choice to live differently than everyone around him. We can rise up like this every day. When someone is unkind to us and instead of becoming angry we bless them instead, that is heroic because it is hard to do.



Chapter 5 - Joseph in Prison from Forgotten to Formidable, A Hero's Lesson in Patient Preparation

Pharaoh's dream:

Genesis 41:1: (NRSV) *After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile...*

He was stuck in prison another two years! Are we willing to wait in such unenviable circumstances? What would we be doing while waiting? Joseph lived a life of great integrity.

Habakkuk 2:1-3: (NRSV) *¹I will stand at my watch post, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch...²Then the LORD answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. ³For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.*



(Raffaello) Raffaello Santi - Raphael/Joseph a. Pharaoh s dreams/c. 1515

Back to the dreams:

Genesis 41:2-8: (NASB) *²And lo, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass. ³Then behold, seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. ⁴The ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke. ⁵He fell asleep and dreamed a second time; and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good. ⁶Then behold, seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them. ⁷The thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream. ⁸Now in the morning his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh.*

Jesus waited until he came of age to begin his work. Long before Jesus was 30, he knew what he had to do and prepared for that work.

To wait is *not* to be idle; it is to prepare!

Luke 2:49-52: (KJV) *⁴⁹And he said unto them, how is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? ⁵⁰And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. ⁵¹And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. ⁵²And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.*



Had years of preparation doing God's will

Had years of preparation doing God's will



The value of integrity when no one is looking:

Genesis 41:9-16: (NRSV) ⁹Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, I remember my faults today.

So the cupbearer recounts the dreams in prison...

¹²A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each according to his dream. ¹³As he interpreted to us, so it turned out; I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged. ¹⁴Then Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was hurriedly brought out of the dungeon. When he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh. ¹⁵And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you could interpret it. ¹⁶Joseph answered Pharaoh, It is not I; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.



The Hero's Choice:
SULK IN THE STATE OF
BEING FORGOTTEN
OR SHARPEN YOUR SKILLS
IN THE NON-PUBLIC TIME GRANTED!

The fifth lesson in living heroically: When opportunity seems to present itself and fade, the true lifetime hero does not see the loss; rather he sees the gold in pursuing continued discipline and preparation. He interpreted dreams and then years went by before he would be called on again. But during those intervening years he lived to the same standard of dedication regardless of his circumstances.

So, how boldly do we proceed when opportunity finally does present itself?

Chapter 6 - Joseph Elevated to the Right Hand of Pharaoh, A Hero's Lesson in Rising to the Occasion



Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream:

Genesis 41:25-40: (NRSV) ²⁵Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁶The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one. ²⁷The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, as are the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind. They are seven years of famine. ²⁸It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁹There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt.

³⁰After them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; the famine will consume the land. ³¹The plenty will no longer be known in the land because of the famine that will follow, for it will be very grievous. ³²And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.

Joseph knows what God has revealed and has no fear in speaking it while giving credit to God Almighty, even though Pharaoh is heralded as god on earth!



Joseph even gave Pharaoh advice:

Genesis 41:33-36: (NASB) ³³Now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. ³⁴Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance. ³⁵Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh's authority, and let them guard it. ³⁶Let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land will not perish during the famine.

Joseph not only gives interpretation from God, he also gives sound and clear advice from God as to how to make use of the window of opportunity to prepare for famine. This serves as an additional verification of the genuineness of the interpretation.

Joseph becomes governor, *Joseph (1995 movie)*

- *It would call for a man of exceptional talent. Potiphar perhaps. The answer is obvious. There could be no better man for this job than this man himself! Could we find anyone endowed with the Spirit of God as he is?*

Joseph was ready because he "did the work" in the quiet times in prison, while being persecuted and while being left for dead.

Genesis 41:37-40: (NASB) ³⁷Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants. ³⁸Then Pharaoh said to his servants, can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit? ³⁹So Pharaoh said to Joseph, Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. ⁴⁰You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you.

Joseph becomes governor, *Joseph (1995 movie)*

- *Now hear the word of Pharaoh, Rah on earth, God as man. You shall be my chancellor. And all my people shall respect your orders. Only this throne shall set me above you. I make you the governor of all of Egypt. I set you over my house, my people, my entire kingdom without your consent no man shall lift a hand or foot in all of Egypt.*

Genesis 41:41-49: (NASB) ⁴¹Pharaoh said to Joseph, See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt. ⁴²Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck. ⁴³He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, Bow the knee! And he set him over all the land of Egypt...⁴⁶Now Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh and Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. ⁴⁷During the seven years of plenty the land brought forth abundantly. ⁴⁸So he gathered all the food of these seven years, which occurred in the land of Egypt and placed the food in the cities; he placed in every city the food from its own surrounding fields. ⁴⁹Thus Joseph stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea, until he stopped measuring it, for it was beyond measure.





The Hero's Choice: KOWTOW TO THE POWERS THAT BE OR PROCLAIM THE REALITY THAT NEEDS FACING WITH FORCE!

The sixth lesson in living heroically: The hero's full confidence in his mission can bring full cooperation of all.

Chapter 7 - Joseph Prepares to Save the World and His Family, A Hero's Lesson in Using Power with Integrity

 [True Hero, www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com)

- *A hero to me is someone who is always there for you and someone you can really trust.*
- *I believe that heroes are the people that do what needs to be done when it needs to be done regardless of the consequence.*
- *A hero to me is a selfless person who puts their life on the line for people that they love or for someone they don't even know.*
- *I like to think of a hero as someone you can look up to, who sets a good example for those around you.*

Genesis 41:50-57: (NASB) ⁵⁰Now before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphra priest of On, bore to him. ⁵¹Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, for, he said, God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household. ⁵²He named the second Ephraim, for, he said, God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.

This is such a lesson for us to patiently wait for the blessings of God **while standing for the truths of God**. This time period is when Joseph was between 31 and 37 years old; 14 to 20 years after being sold as a slave. He now has enormous responsibility.

⁵³When the seven years of plenty, which had been in the land of Egypt, came to an end, ⁵⁴and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said, then there was famine in all the lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. ⁵⁵So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do. ⁵⁶When the famine was spread over all the face of the earth, then Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians; and the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. ⁵⁷The people of all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the earth.

Here we see integrity shining through. It is not enough to hear of the plan, one must speak it boldly and act on it with such zeal that those who look at us can plainly see the conduit of God's will. Because Joseph was so God-honoring in his approach, he had no lack of confidence. He not only alleviated a physical famine but also a potential spiritual and emotional famine in the land. He prepared for the people so well that they had no worries.



John 6:68-69: (NASB) ⁶⁸*Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.*

Genesis 42:1-17 (NASB) ¹*Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, why are you staring at one another? ²He said, Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy some for us from that place, so that we may live and not die. ³Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt...⁵So the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also.*

Need presents opportunity...

⁶*Now Joseph was the ruler over the land; he was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him with their faces to the ground...⁸But Joseph had recognized his brothers, although they did not recognize him. ⁹Joseph remembered the dreams, which he had about them, and said to them, you are spies; you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land. ¹⁰Then they said to him, No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food. ¹¹We are all sons of one man; we are honest men, your servants are not spies...Your servants are twelve brothers in all, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold, the youngest is with our father today, and one is no longer alive. ¹⁵by this you will be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here! ¹⁶Send one of you that he may get your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you. But if not, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies. ¹⁷So he put them all together in prison for three days.*

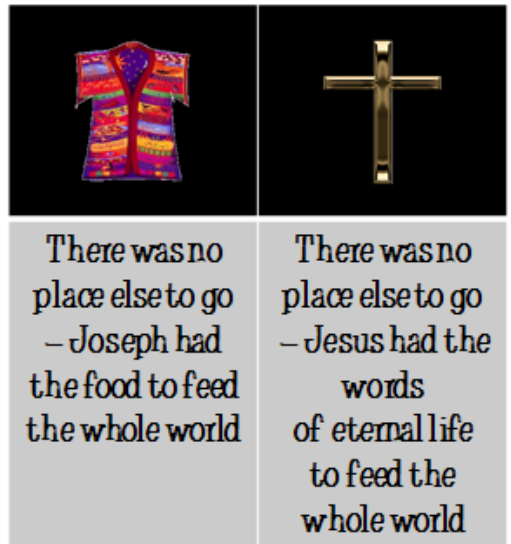
10 brothers in prison, Joseph (1995 movie)

- Stop it! Stop it! Arguing won't get us out of here.
- Then what will?
- Not what, but who!
- God! Is this His final punishment for what we did?
- Imagine how Joseph must have felt when we threw him down the well!
- We have each other. You left him alone!
- We, WE threw him in the well. All of us!
- There's no point dwelling on that. For twenty years you've argued the same thing, but what's done is done. One thing has nothing to do with another.
- Are you sure, brother? (Continued yelling and arguing)

The guilt they carried becomes evident. They said these things in front of Joseph, not realizing that he understood everything they said. Joseph used an interpreter so that it looked like he did not speak their language!

Genesis 42:23-25: (NASB) ²³*They did not know, however, that Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between them. ²⁴He turned away from them and wept. But when he returned to them and spoke to them, he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes. ²⁵Then Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain and to restore every man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. And thus it was done for them.*

Joseph tested them to see if they were in fact sincere and had integrity.





(Source: Biblical commentary by Matthew Henry) The imprisonment of Simeon, Genesis 42:24. He chose him for the hostage probably because he remembered him to have been his most bitter enemy, or because he observed him now to be least humbled and concerned; he bound him before their eyes to affect them all.

Joseph had been tested over 20+ years of hardship. Here was the opportunity to see if his brothers had also learned from their experience over those same 20+ years.

Similarly, Jesus is testing us to make sure that we have learned from our experiences and are sincere and with integrity.

They were instructed to bring Benjamin back to Egypt to achieve the release of Simeon - a dilemma for sure!

Genesis 42:35-38: (NASB) ³⁵Now it came about as they were emptying their sacks, that behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack; and when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were dismayed. ³⁶Their father Jacob said to them, you have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me. ³⁷Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, You may put my two sons to death if I do not bring him back to you; put him in my care, and I will return him to you. ³⁸But Jacob said, my son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.

As the grain is depleted, Jacob finally agrees because the famine continued.



The Hero's Choice:

**BE OVERCOME WITH REVENGE
FOR WRONGS DONE
OR TEST TO SEE
IF INTEGRITY HAS GROWN
IN THE PLACE OF JEALOUSY
IN THE HEARTS
OF THOSE WHO DID THE WRONG!**

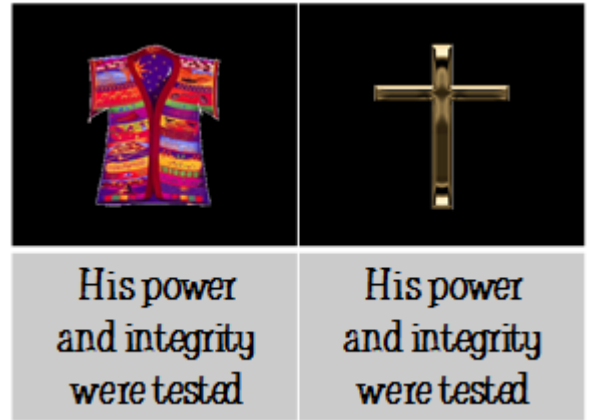
The seventh lesson in living heroically: Integrity requires the use of power with Godly responsibility. Integrity requires passion - but a passion for godliness and mercy and NOT for what we may feel.

We should be inspired to change ourselves. Has integrity grown in my heart in place of the wrongs I have done? Joseph lived that life of change, one day at a time through all circumstances. Once he was given responsibility, he still acted in the same way. He did not change because the circumstances changed; the circumstances changed to match his abilities. He was given that leadership because God prepared him and he accepted that preparation.



The power and integrity of Jesus was tested and he in turn tested the integrity of his followers:

Luke 4:5-8: (NRSV) ⁵Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And the devil said to him, to you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours. ⁸Jesus answered him, it is written, Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.



Mark 8:31-34: (NRSV) ³¹Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering...and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things. ³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Chapter 8 - Joseph Teaches, Forgives and Provides, A Hero's Lesson in Completing the Mission

So, the brothers go back to Egypt bearing gifts and double the money for payment. Joseph receives them and continues to test them. They show honesty and humility when brought to Joseph's house. Joseph again sets them up and again a brother - this time Judah - offers himself instead of Benjamin.

Joseph is the forgiver and preserver of life:

Genesis 45:1-15: (NRSV) ¹Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, Send everyone away from me. So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ²And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. ³Joseph said to his brothers, I am Joseph. Is my father still alive? But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence. ⁴Then Joseph said to his brothers come closer to me. And they came closer. He said, I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.

 **Am I to take the place of God, Joseph (1995 movie)**

- *I am Joseph.*
- *Joseph? It is my brother Joseph.*
- *Yes, it is I but be at peace. Come closer. Don't be afraid, I will not harm you. Am I to take the place of God?*

The family was the subject of the promise of God, so he could not minimize the situation. Joseph was not bitter for what they had done to him years earlier.

⁵And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸So it was not you who sent me here, but God; He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all His house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.



Joseph understood that his real reason for being there was to preserve his family. He had compassion for their suffering. When someone treats you poorly, do you ever consider that it is actually a blessing from God to improve your Christian character?

God meant it for good, Joseph (1995 movie)

- *It is not for me to punish you. You meant evil against me, yes, but God meant it for good. To bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today.*

⁹Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay.¹⁰You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹I will provide for you there since there are five more years of famine to come so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty. ¹²And now your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my own mouth that speaks to you. ¹³You must tell my father how greatly I am honored in Egypt, and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here. ¹⁴Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, while Benjamin wept upon his neck. ¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

Blessed be His name, Joseph (1995 movie)

- *I want you near me in the land of Goshen so that I may provide for you during the remaining years of the famine. I have spoken to the Pharaoh. All is prepared. Come to me. Come to me, I'm your brother. I am Joseph.*
- *(All brothers crying and talking)*



The Hero's Choice:
BE TENTATIVE IN APPLYING
THAT WHICH YOU
HAVE ACCOMPLISHED TO OTHERS OR
POUR OUT THE GIFTS YOU HAVE
SECURED WITH UNBRIDLED
GOODNESS AND MERCY !

The eighth lesson in living heroically: Having stayed the course through all manner of trial and uncertainty, freely bestow upon others the freedom and privilege that your efforts have bought for them. That is what a hero does.

John 3:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him.



What a great and inspiring story of a hero who lived his heroic integrity to God his whole life, no matter what the outside circumstances were!

*So, who was that hero in the multi-colored coat?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Kathy!) and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!*



*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*

Some absolutely fascinating www.YouTube.com videos on Joseph and the history of his time! Watch these!!

Joseph, Son of Jacob, Archeology Evidence in Egypt, Part 1:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtwXJTyFyhU>

Joseph, Son of Jacob, Archeology Evidence in Egypt, Part 2:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_u32-TZqhc

McClintock and Strong's Cyclopedia of the Bible on Joseph - various points of interest excerpted:

Seven years of abundance afforded Joseph opportunity to carry into effect such plans as secured an ample provision against the seven years of need. The famine came, but it found a prepared people. The representations of the monuments which show that the contents of the granaries were accurately noted by the scribes when they were filled, well illustrate this part of the history. The visitation was not merely local, for "the famine was over all the face of the earth;" "and all countries came into Egypt to Joseph to buy corn." (ver. 56, 57). The expressions here used, however, do not require us to suppose that the famine extended beyond the countries around Egypt, such as Palestine, Syria, and Arabia, as well as some part of Africa, although of course



it may have been more widely experienced. It may be observed, that although famines in Egypt depend immediately upon the failure of the inundation, and in other countries upon the failure of rain, yet that, as the rise of the Nile is caused by heavy rains in Ethiopia, an extremely dry season there and in Palestine would produce the result described in the sacred narrative.

It must also be recollected that Egypt was anciently the granary of neighboring countries and that a famine there would cause first scarcity, and then famine, around. Famines are not very unfrequent in the history of Egypt; but the famous seven years' famine in the reign of the Fatimite Caliph El'Mustansir-billah is the only known parallel to that of Joseph. Early in the time of famine, Joseph's brethren came to buy corn, a part of the history which we mention here only as indicating the liberal policy of the governor of Egypt, by which the storehouses were opened to all buyers, of whatever nation they were.....

4. We have now to consider the conduct of Joseph at this time towards his brethren and his father. Early in the time of famine, which prevailed equally in Canaan and Egypt, Jacob reproved his helpless sons and sent them to Egypt, where he knew there was corn to be bought. Benjamin alone he kept with him. Joseph was now governor, an Egyptian in habits and speech, for like all men of large mind he had suffered no scruples of prejudice to make him a stranger to the people he ruled. In his exalted station he labored with the zeal that he showed in all his various charges, presiding himself at the sale of corn. They had, of necessity, to appear before Joseph, whose license for the purchase of corn was indispensable. Joseph had probably expected to see them, and he seems to have formed a deliberate plan of action. His conduct has brought on him the always ready charges of those who would rather impeach than study the Bible, and even friends of that sacred book have hardly in this case done Joseph full justice.

Joseph's main object appears to have been to make his brothers feel and recognize their guilt in their conduct towards him. For this purpose suffering, then as well as now, was indispensable. Accordingly, Joseph feigned not to know his brothers, charged them with being spies, threatened them with imprisonment and allowed them to return home to fetch their younger brother, as a proof of their veracity, only on condition that one of them should remain behind in chains, with a prospect of death before him should not their words be verified. Then it was, and not before, that "they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul and would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben said, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear? therefore behold, also his blood is required." (<14221> Genesis 42:21). Upon this after weeping bitterly, he by common agreement bound his brother Simeon, and left him in custody. How deeply concerned Joseph was for his family, how true and affectionate a heart he had, may be learned from the words which escape from the brothers in their entreaty that Jacob would allow Benjamin to go into Egypt, as required by Joseph: "The man asked us straightly of our state and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? Have ye another brother?" (<14307>Genesis 43:7).....



...Benjamin had come, and immediately a natural change took place in Joseph's conduct: the brother began to claim his rights in Joseph's bosom. Jacob was safe, and Benjamin was safe. Joseph's heart melted at the sight of Benjamin: "And he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home, and slay and make ready, for these men shall dine with me at noon" (<14316> Genesis 43:16). But guilt is always the ready parent of fear; accordingly, the brothers expected nothing but being reduced to slavery. When taken to their own brother's house, they imagined they were being entrapped. A colloquy ensued between them and Joseph's steward, whence it appeared that the money put into their sacks, to which they now attributed their peril, was in truth a present from Joseph, designed, after his own brotherly manner, to aid his family in their actual necessities. The steward said, "Peace be to you; fear not; your God and the God of your father hath given you the treasure in your sacks. I had your money." (ver. 23).

Noon came, and with it Joseph, whose first question regarded home: "He asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? is he yet alive? And he lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your younger brother? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son!" "And Joseph made haste, for his bowels did yearn upon his brother, and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there." Does this look like harshness?

The connection brings into view an Egyptian custom, which is of more than ordinary importance, in consequence of its being adopted in the Jewish polity: "And they set on (food) for him by himself (Joseph), and for them by themselves (the brethren), and for the Egyptians which did eat with them, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination with the Egyptians" (ver. 32). This passage is also interesting, as proving that Joseph had not, in his princely grandeur, become ashamed of his origin, nor consented to receive adoption into a strange nation: he was still a Hebrew, waiting, like Moses after him, for the proper season to use his power for the good of his own people. Other customs appear in this interesting narrative: "And they (the brothers) sat before him (Joseph), the first born according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth." "And he sent messes (delicacies) unto them from before him; but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs" (ver. 32, 33). Fear had now given place to wonder, and wonder at length issued in joy and mirth (comp. ver. 18, 33, 34). The scenes of the Egyptian tombs show us that it was the custom for each person to eat singly, particularly among the great; that guests were placed according to their right of precedence, and that it was usual to drink freely, men and even women being represented as overpowered with wine, probably as an evidence of the liberality of the entertainer.

Joseph, apparently with a view to ascertain how far his brethren were faithful to their father, hit upon a plan which would in its issue serve to show whether they would make any, and what sacrifice, in order to fulfill their solemn promise of restoring Benjamin in safety to Jacob. Accordingly, he orders not only that every man's money (as before) should be put in his sack's mouth, but also that his "silver cup, in which my lord drinketh, and whereby he divineth,"



should be put in the sack's mouth of the youngest. The brethren leave, but are soon overtaken by Joseph's steward, who charges them with having surreptitiously carried off this costly and highly valued vessel. They, on their part, vehemently repel the accusation, adding, "with whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen." A search is made, and the cup is found in Benjamin's sack. Accordingly they return to the city. And now comes the hour of trial: Would they purchase their own liberation by surrendering Benjamin? After a most touching interview, in which they prove themselves worthy and faithful, Joseph declares himself unable any longer to withstand the appeal of natural affection. On this occasion Judah, who is the spokesman, shows the deepest regard to his aged father's feelings, and entreats for the liberation of Benjamin even at the price of his own liberty. In the whole of literature we know of nothing more simple, natural, true, and impressive; nor, while passages of this kind stand in the Pentateuch, can we even understand what is meant by terming that collection of writings "the Hebrew national epic," or regarding it as an aggregation of historical legends. If here we have not history, we can in no case be sure that history is before us (<14401> Genesis 44).