

A Daily Devotional Study Guide

The Book of Genesis

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth - Genesis 1:1

WEEK 13

“They Have Changed”

Study: Genesis 44:1-34

Reading: --

Memory: Proverbs 3:2

When I first went to Bible college as a freshman, one of my great desires was simply to have fun. I was often getting in trouble and hung around a group of people who seemed to always be pushing the limits when it came to obeying the rules. The impression I gave many people was quite negative and the “good” kids knew that I wasn’t the best person to be a friend with. By the time my wife-to-be enrolled at the Bible college, I was in the second semester of my sophomore year. During the end of my freshman year and into the first part of my sophomore year, God was getting ahold of my heart and I was slowly being transformed by the Holy Spirit. By the time I met Jen, I was a much different person than when I first arrived at college. Needless to say, many people warned my wife about me because they had a negative view from the person I was at the beginning of college.

Today, we are going to see how the brothers of Joseph had changed. The transformation that took place in their lives became evident to Joseph. This eventually would lead to Joseph revealing himself to them.

What Does the Bible Say?

The question that you might be thinking is “Why did Joseph wait so long to reveal himself to his brothers?” Though we might not know for sure, it appears he did much of what he did because he was unsure of how his brothers would feel about him. After a meal with them, he chose not to reveal himself yet, but ordered that the men be given as much grain as they could carry and to put their money back in the mouth of their sacks. He also wanted his servants to put his special silver cup in Benjamin’s bag (vs 1-2).

The sons of Israel began to travel back home, and, after they had been gone for a short time, Joseph sent his men to catch up to his brothers and ask them why they stole from him. It appears that Joseph wanted to see how they would treat Benjamin since a cup from the house of Joseph was in his bag. When the Egyptian soldiers caught the sons of Israel, the

questioning began. The soldiers reminded them of the words they had said before as they declared that if any of them had stolen from Egypt, they would become servants to Egypt. They began searching the sacks and the last one they looked at was Benjamin's. When the sack was opened, the brothers were distraught to see the cup of Joseph in Benjamin's sack. They might have been upset, thinking that Benjamin might have done this, but the overwhelming realization that deflated their spirits was the fact that it was Benjamin, the precious son of Jacob. Instead of allowing Benjamin to go back by himself into slavery in Egypt, they all loaded up on their donkeys and headed back with Benjamin and the guards to city (vs 3-13).

They arrived back at the house of Joseph and fell on their knees before him in a sign of humility and repentance. Joseph began to question them by asking them why they stole from his house. Judah spoke up, declaring that they would all be the servants to Joseph, not just Benjamin. He declared, "God has found out the guilt of your servants" which seems to be a reference to the fact that they were now having to pay for what they had done to Joseph many years before. Joseph said that he didn't want them all to suffer for the crime of one man so he only wanted to keep the one who stole the cup (vs 14-17).

Judah spoke up again and started explaining how their father did not want them to bring Benjamin, but they had to because Joseph had insisted that they bring Benjamin. Judah declared that his father would die if they did not return back with Benjamin. (Remember it was Judah that led his brothers in selling Joseph into slavery.) Judah related how he spoke up for Benjamin and swore to his father with his life that he would bring Benjamin back home safely. Judah offered to exchange his life for Benjamin's. He was willing to be a life long slave to Egypt so that Benjamin could go free. By this, Judah was showing Joseph how much his attitude had changed over the last twenty years (vs 18-34).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Isn't it wonderful that God can change a person? Think about how much God has changed you. Many times those changes occur little by little, but over time the change is clear. This is something that should be remembered when you are working with people or frustrated with others. It is easy to continually think negatively about someone else because of the past and not accept change. I Corinthians 13 tells us that love always hopes and looks for the best in people. Ask God to continue to change you and to help you be patient with others around you.

What did Joseph command his men to do before his brothers traveled home (vs 1-2)?

What did Joseph send his men to accuse the brothers of (vs 3-5)?

How did the brothers respond (vs 6-7)?

What did they use as proof of their honesty (vs 8)?

What was found (vs 9-12)?

How did the brothers respond (vs 13)?

What did Joseph declare about himself (vs 14-15)? Why do you think he declared this?

How does verse 16 show the humility the brothers presented?

What did Joseph say he would do (vs 17)?

What did Judah do (vs 18-23)?

Why do you think that Judah recounted the situation in such detail (vs 24-28)?

Why did Judah say that Israel did not want to send Benjamin (vs 29)?

What did Judah say would happen to Israel if Benjamin did not return with them (vs 30-31)?

Why do you think it is significant that Judah was the spokesperson for the brothers?

What did Judah offer (vs 33)?

What did this offer reveal (vs 33-34)?

Why is it important to realize that people can and do change?

“A Sovereign God”

Study: Genesis 45:1-15

Reading: Romans 8:1-39

Memory: Proverbs 3:2

When my wife was in her late 30's she started to experience some physical problems and she felt like her heart was having issues. We were unsure about what was happening. After a little while I began to suspect that much of the problems she was facing were not actually physical problem with her heart, but they were the result of stress. To rule out physical issues, she wore a heart monitor for a week. The tests came back very normal and we concluded that the issues were being caused by stress. We started to do our best to help her overcome these issues, but sometimes we began to wonder why those things were happening. They were causing us to pull back from many of the “good things” we were involved in and my wife started to feel a little useless in the service of the God that she loved. Though we didn't understand “Why?” at the time, God knew and was using those events to slowly prepare us for the big move He had for us as He directed us to a new ministry. Now, as we look back on those difficult times, we see the great and mighty hand of God through it all.

Today, we are going to see how Joseph did not become bitter or angry at God for what God allowed him to go through, but was thankful because God had used it to get him to the place where he needed to be.

What Does the Bible Say?

After it became evident to Joseph that his brothers had changed and chose not to abandon Benjamin as they abandoned him many years before, Joseph could no longer keep up the charade, but had to reveal himself. He told all of his servants to leave the room so that he alone was left with his brothers. He began to cry and his weeping was so loud that those who stepped out of the room could clearly hear it. All the emotions that had been pent up inside of him for years began rushing out as he declared to his brothers that he was Joseph, their brother. Though he had already asked them about his father, he once again wanted to know if his father was still alive. Though he desired to hear from his brothers, they couldn't

answer him because they were so shocked at the revelation that Joseph had just made. It must be remembered that the last time they had seen Joseph they wanted to kill him, but instead settled with selling him into slavery. They must have been excited to see him, but at the same time fear for their lives must have swept over them (vs 1-3).

Joseph wanted them to come near him so that he could hug them and greet them with affection. They must have hesitantly moved towards him because he had to tell them they didn't need to be afraid. Though they had sent him to Egypt out of anger, God had used their evil actions to help preserve their lives. They were only two years into the famine and had five more years of drought conditions to face. Joseph clearly realized that it was God who was ultimately in control of where he ended up, though it had been their actions that God had used. Joseph told them that he wanted them to go back and tell their father that they had found Joseph and to bring Jacob back with them. He had a special spot in the land of Egypt picked out for them where they could live and be provided for during the next five years of the famine. The brothers of Joseph must have been in great disbelief and I can't imagine all the thoughts and emotions that must have been swirling through their heads. Joseph wasn't going to let their reserved reactions keep him from pouring out his heart to them. He went and hugged Benjamin first and wept for a long time on his younger brother's neck. Following this, he hugged each one of his older brothers declaring his love for them (vs 4-15).

How Does this Apply to Me?

How willing are you to see God's sovereign plan in your life? Do you have enough faith in God to believe that even the “worst” things that happen to you are part of His plan? Are you willing to trust Him through the bad times so that you can eventually see the good and the purpose behind the trials you experience. From a human perspective, Joseph had every right to be upset at God and to quit serving God because of all the things that happened to him. Yet, through each circumstance and trial, he chose to trust God and believe that God was going to turn the hard times into something good. He was now experiencing the fruits of his faith and great joy was flooding his soul. When you go through trials and wonder why, and when you want to quit and give up because life seems so hard, remember the story of Joseph. Remember that God has not abandoned you, but is using every trial and every situation to bring Him great glory and to work about good in your life.

What could Joseph not do (vs 1)?

Why do you think he was so emotional?

What did Joseph tell his servants to do (vs 1)?

Why do you think he did this?

How hard was Joseph's weeping (vs 2)?

What did Joseph reveal (vs 3)?

Why do you think he asked about Israel (vs 3)?

How did his brothers respond (vs 3)?

What did Joseph declare again (vs 4)?

What did Joseph tell his brothers not to do (vs 5)?

What did Joseph declare about the sovereignty of God (vs 5)?

What did Joseph reveal about the famine (vs 6-7)?

What did Joseph say about being sent to Egypt (vs 8)?

What did Joseph want his brothers to do (vs 9)?

What had Joseph planned for his family (vs 10)?

What did Joseph want to do for his family (vs 11)?

What did Joseph emphasize in verse 12?

What did Joseph want Israel to know (vs 13)?

What did Joseph do for all of his brothers (vs 14)?

How do you think Joseph was able to respond this way?

“Godly Character”

Study: Genesis 45:16-28

Reading: Proverbs 16:1-9, Galatians 5:16-25

Memory: Proverbs 3:2

When my wife and I started working as substitute teachers in the Benzie public schools we were amazed at how much people seemed to accept us. Over and over again we would hear reports from students and teachers alike about how happy they were that we were part of the school. This sometimes puzzled us because we weren't really teachers nor did we have a passion for teaching. It didn't take long to realize that one of the reasons we were well liked was because of our Christian character. We displayed the love, grace, compassion and mercy that Christ had shown to us. This was different than the way that many other people lived. It was not because we were “great” people, but because we had learned to walk in the Spirit and let Christ be seen through our lives.

Today, we are going to see how Joseph became a valuable part of the Egyptian empire. This value was not because he was naturally gifted, but it was a result of his trust in God and his obedience to Him. His humble, submissive spirit allowed God to work through Him and caused him to make a major impact on others around him.

What Does the Bible Say?

The excitement over Joseph's brothers wasn't contained to his house only because the Pharaoh was also very excited to hear the news. He told Joseph to tell his brothers to bring their father and their families back to Egypt to live with them. He would give them the best land in Egypt for them to live in and would provide for all of their needs. He also told Joseph to give his brothers the use of Egyptian wagons to go and pick up their father and families. They didn't have to worry about food or supplies because all of it would be provided for their journey. Once they settled in the land, they would be well taken care of. This reveals how much Pharaoh loved, respected and appreciated Joseph. The Pharaoh most likely was also afraid that he might lose Joseph because Joseph might possibly want to go back home (vs 16-20).

Joseph did as Pharaoh had said and gave wagons to his brothers and provided them with food and a change of clothes for the journey. He showed great favor to Benjamin by giving him a great deal of silver (over seven pounds) and five changes of clothes. He then told his brothers to go home quickly and return with his father and their families. He also told them not to quarrel on the way home. The last instruction about quarreling was an interesting one and perhaps it was because they may have started quarreling in his presence. It also could have been because they were still afraid of what Joseph might do to them. Guilt does strange things to people and often leads to many arguments and fights. Perhaps their argument would have been over how they were going to reveal to their father what they had done to Joseph over 20 years before (vs 21-24).

The brothers traveled from Egypt back to the land of Canaan and arrived home. We are not exactly sure what they told their father except for the fact that they told him that Joseph was still alive and that he was the ruler of Egypt. What a shock this news must have been to Jacob. He had a very difficult time believing them. They told him everything that Joseph had said and he still had a hard time believing, but when he saw the Egyptian wagons that brought them back from Egypt, he had no choice but to believe. He agreed to Joseph's request and they began preparing to move down to Egypt (vs 25-28).

How Does this Apply to Me?

How valuable of a person are you to your workplace, your team, your classmates, your neighborhood, etc.? Yes, your natural gifts and abilities do make you valuable in those places, but more than that, if your life is reflecting God to others, your value will often skyrocket. In a world that is based in selfishness, where people are constantly stepping on others and putting others down in order to get ahead, your selfless love and servanthood will shine as a bright light. Of course, there will be some situations where standing up for Christian values will not be accepted, but most of the time the character that an obedient believer displays wins great favor from those around them. Just as Joseph had become more valuable than any man in Egypt, you can become one of the most valuable people to those around you by simply following God's plan for your life. If others around you don't seem to view you as a valuable part of the group you are in, perhaps you need to take some time to evaluate your life to see if you are not letting the fruit of the Spirit flow out of you.

Who heard that Joseph's brothers were there (vs 16)?

How did he respond (vs 16)?

What offer did Pharaoh make to Joseph's family (vs 17-18)?

What type of land was Pharaoh going to give (vs 18)?

Why do you think he made this offer?

What was Pharaoh's plan for getting Israel and the family to Egypt (vs 19)?

What did Pharaoh say they did not need to be concerned about (vs 20)?

How did Joseph carry out the plan (vs 21)?

What did Joseph give to his brothers (vs 22)?

Why did he give Benjamin more (vs 22)?

What did Joseph send for his father (vs 23)?

What did Joseph tell his brothers not to do (vs 24)?

Why do you think he told them this?

What did they tell Israel once they reached home (vs 26)?

What was the response of Israel (vs 26)?

Why do you think he responded this way?

What helped convince Israel (vs 27)?

What did Israel want to do (vs 28)?

How do you think you would have felt if you were in that situation?

“In But Not Of”

Study: Genesis 46:1-34

Reading: John 17:1-26

Memory: Proverbs 3:2

What Does the Bible Say?

Israel had agreed to the request of Joseph and the Pharaoh and loaded up his family to begin their trip to Egypt. On the way down, they stopped at Beersheba, the southern most part of the land of Canaan, and there Jacob offered sacrifices unto God. That night, God appeared to him and told him not to be afraid to go down to Egypt. This was all part of God’s plan for his family and God would bless his family when they were down in Egypt. They would become a great nation while in Egypt and would eventually leave the land of Egypt and would return to the land of Canaan and make it their own. Jacob would make it to see Joseph before he died and Joseph would have a part in burying him (vs 1-4).

They continued their journey in the wagons that the Pharaoh had sent and took all of their animals and the possessions they valued down to Egypt with them. The whole family of Jacob traveled to Egypt with them and no one stayed behind in Israel. Verses 8-25 list the names of all the descendants of Israel who traveled to Egypt with him. We are told that there were 66 children and grandchildren who made the trip. In Egypt, Joseph had two sons, so, with Jacob, there were a total of 70 blood relatives that settled in the land of Egypt. This does not count those who married into the family or the servants that they took with them (vs 5-27).

When they were close to Egypt, Jacob sent Judah ahead of them to let Joseph know they were coming and to find out where they were going to be dwelling. He must have arrived at Joseph’s house and told him that their father was on the way. Joseph loaded his chariot and rode out to meet his father. What a sweet reunion they must have had after being apart for over 22 years. Jacob must have been overwhelmed with emotion and stated that he was ready to die now that he had seen his son face to face (vs 28-30).

Joseph told his brothers to stay there while he went to talk to Pharaoh. He knew that Pharaoh would question them about what work they could do and Joseph told them to let Pharaoh know that they were shepherds.

This would allow them to stay together as a family and not be split up because the Egyptians didn’t like shepherds. This would also allow them to live separate lives from the Egyptians and would allow them to worship their God without any interference (vs 31-34).

How Does this Apply to Me?

When Jesus prayed for His followers he prayed, “I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” (ESV - John 17:15-16) Since sin entered into the world, those who follow God have had to make the choice to follow Him in this world though sin exists all around them. There are three ways that followers of God often respond to sin in the world around them. Some pull away from the world altogether and have very little to do with the society around them. Others engross themselves in the world and let the world influence them so they are just like the world. But there are those who stand strong in their faith while at the same time interact with the world around them in a way that lets them display who God is to the world. The Israelites were now in Egypt, a very wicked land, but God used their occupation as shepherds to help keep them separate from the Egyptians while living in Egypt. I believe that Joseph is a great example of being able to live in the world without letting the world overtake him. Though Joseph was working in a high rank as an Egyptian leader, he was still able to live out a godly life in the middle of a pagan world. Take time to evaluate how you are living in the world around you. Ask God to show you how He wants you to interact with the world around you on a daily basis.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Thank God for protecting you from the world around you.*
- * *Ask God to help you be in the world but not of the world.*
- * *Praise God because He gives you the power to live for Him.*

Thought for the day

Where did Jacob offer sacrifices to God (vs 1)? Why do you think he offered them there?

What did God tell Jacob (vs 2-3)?

Why was it important for Jacob to know that God would be with him (vs 4)?

What did Jacob and his family travel with (vs 5-7)?

How many direct descendants of Abraham went down to Egypt (vs 26)?

What does this reveal about the promises of God?

How many sons did Joseph have (vs 27)?

Who did Jacob send ahead to let Joseph know they were coming (vs 28)?

Why do you think Jacob sent him?

What did Joseph do when he found out his father was near (vs 29)?

What did Joseph do when he saw his father (vs 29)?

How did Jacob respond when he saw Joseph (vs 30)? Why do you think he responded this way?

What did Joseph plan to do once he saw all of his family (vs 31)?

What did Joseph intend to tell Pharaoh (vs 32)? Why?

Why do you think Joseph emphasized the importance of letting Pharaoh know they were shepherds (vs 33)?

Where did Joseph intend for his family to live (vs 34)?

Why was Goshen a great place for them to live and settle down?

What does this reveal about God's provision?

“God’s Blessings”

Study: Genesis 47:1-26

Reading: Matthew 7:7-11, James 1:12-18

Memory: Proverbs 3:2

What Does the Bible Say?

Joseph took five of his brothers with him to meet Pharaoh. He told Pharaoh that his family and their possessions had all arrived from Canaan and were ready to settle in the land of Goshen. Pharaoh asked the brothers of Joseph what their occupation was, and they told him they were animal herders and they would like to live in Goshen because the land was fertile for their animals. Pharaoh told Joseph that their request would be granted and wanted Joseph to give them the best of the land. He also said that Joseph could put his brothers in charge of all of the royal livestock (vs 1-6).

Sometime after this, Joseph took Jacob with him to meet the Pharaoh. Pharaoh was curious about how old Jacob was and Jacob told him he was 130 years old. He described the 130 years of his life as a short life span. Though the average age that people lived had been slowly declining, the comment by Jacob gave the idea that people still lived into their late 100's or longer at that time. The point of his stating this was to describe how his life had been full of difficulties and tragedies. Jacob thanked Pharaoh for his kindness and went with Joseph back to Goshen. We are told that this was in the land of Rameses, but most likely it wasn't called that when Joseph moved his family there. This was probably the name given later on before the Exodus. The family of Israel was no longer starving, but instead, they were being provided for abundantly with food and a place for their animals to graze. Though there was a drought in the land, the Nile river still kept areas fertile, allowing grass to grow for the grazing animals (vs 7-12).

The dream that God gave Pharaoh had come true and after the years of plenty, there were several years of great poverty. The people in the region were willing to give up everything in order to survive. At first, they paid for grain with the money they had (normally gold and silver since there wasn't a common monetary system). When that was gone, they sold their livestock to Joseph. As the famine continued, they sold

their land to Joseph and eventually sold themselves as servants of Pharaoh. During this time, the Egyptian empire became great and increased greatly in wealth and power. It wasn't that Joseph was taking advantage of others, but God used this as part of His plan for Joseph and the Egyptian nation.

It must be remembered that countries in those days were much smaller than today and were often made up of a few cities with several other cities being ruled over by their own kings or leaders. This famine allowed the first world power to be formed and many of the cities in the region became part of the Egyptian empire because of the famine. The plan that Joseph used was one that is still common today, helping nations grow and prosper. The agreement that Joseph made in exchange for food and seed is that twenty percent of the income of the people was to be given to the nation of Egypt. This is the first recorded record of a national tax and is a similar rate to what many people pay in the United States today (vs 13-26).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you realize how God desires to bless you? The blessing that Jacob received was the sparing of his family, but, in order to get that blessing, he had to go through the loss of his son for 20 plus years. Though that time had to be painful, the bliss of knowing that his family would be taken care of must have brought Jacob great joy. While those around them were losing everything, Jacob and his family had plenty to eat, and their possessions were growing. God desires to continually bless those who are His children. Jesus said, "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:11) Remember that God has the power to bless you in great and mighty ways, but those blessings at first might not appear to be blessings. Let the whole story of the life of Jacob help you look at the big picture of life, and let it help you remember that the thing that you are going through is not as big as it may seem in the current moment.

Thought for the day

What did Joseph inform Pharaoh of (vs 1)?

Who did Joseph bring to Pharaoh (vs 2)?

What did they tell Pharaoh about themselves (vs 3)?

What did they ask permission to do (vs 4)?

What did Pharaoh offer them (vs 5-6)?

Why do you think the Pharaoh was so generous?

Why do you think Joseph brought Jacob to meet the Pharaoh (vs 7)?

What did Jacob reveal about his age (vs 8-9)?

Why do you think Jacob described his days as "few and evil" (vs 9)?

Where did they settle (vs 10-11)?

What did Joseph do for his family (vs 12)?

What does verse 13 reveal about the famine?

How did this famine enable the Egyptian nation to become very wealthy (vs 14)?

What did the people use to buy food (vs 16-17)?

What did the people offer to Joseph in exchange for food (vs 18-19)?

What was Joseph able to do by the end of the famine (vs 20-22)?

What plan did Joseph make when the famine came to an end (vs 23-24)?

How did the people receive the plan (vs 25)?

How many years was Jacob able to live knowing his son was alive (vs 28)?

Memory Verses

Proverbs 3:1 My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, 2 for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.