

JOSEPH

A Life of Virtue

W. ROSS RAINEY



Developed as a study course by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

Joseph: A Life of Virtue

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Published by:

Emmaus Correspondence School
(A division of ECS Ministries)
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First Printed 2010 (AK '10), 1 UNIT

Reprinted 2012 (AK '10), 1 UNIT

ISBN 978-1-59387-109-3

Code: JOS

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Printed in the United States of America

STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

The life of Joseph is a classic Old Testament illustration of the biblical principle that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). We can rest assured that God allows the trials of life to teach us things we would not otherwise learn. The believer’s life is a probation, not a picnic. We need to learn to trust God, this being a primary reason for such trials, keeping in mind that God’s preeminent and overall purpose is to conform us increasingly into the image of Christ Jesus, His Son (Rom. 8:29).

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Course Components

This course has two parts: this study course and the exam booklet.

How To Study

This study has twelve chapters, and each chapter has its own exam. Begin by asking God to help you understand the material. Read the chapter through at least twice, once to get a general idea of its contents and then again, slowly, looking up any Bible references given.

Begin studying immediately, or if you are in a group, as soon as the group begins. We suggest that you keep a regular schedule by trying to complete at least one chapter per week.

Exams

In the exam booklet there is one exam for each chapter (exam 1 covers chapter 1 of the course). For the most part, the answers to the questions in this particular course can be found in the Bible text.

After you have completed each chapter, review the related exam and see how well you know the answers. If you find that you are having difficulty answering the questions, review the material and the Bible text until you think you can answer the questions. It is important that you read the Bible passages referenced as some questions may be based on the Bible text.

How Your Exams Are Graded

Your instructor will mark any incorrectly answered questions. You will be referred back to the place in the course where the correct answer is to be found. After finishing this course with a passing average, you will be awarded a certificate.

If you enrolled in a class, submit your exam papers to the leader or secretary of the class who will send them for the entire group to the Correspondence School.

See the back of the exam booklet for more information on returning the exams for grading.

1

JOSEPH, BELOVED AND HATED

(GENESIS 37:1-17)

Introduction

Joseph is one of the most endearing and outstanding characters in the Bible, and the study of his life offers many practical lessons for believers today.

The first reference to Joseph's life is in Genesis 37:2. However, his birth and references to his name are recorded in Genesis 30:24 and 25; 33:2 and 7, and 35:24. Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob and the first child of Rachel, Jacob's second and favorite wife. He was born into a family

which had many failures, including polygamy, favoritism, rape, murder, incest, and prostitution. Yet, in spite of this sordid background, Joseph stands out as one of the most beautiful characters in the Bible. More chapters in Genesis are devoted to him than to any other person, including Abraham. Like Daniel, not one negative thing is recorded against Joseph. This does not mean that these men were not sinners, but that it was God's purpose to not record any of their faults and failures.

Of all the Hebrew characters in the Old Testament, Joseph is the most perfect example of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, nowhere in the New Testament is he specifically mentioned as a type (picture) of Christ. While heredity and environment influence all of us, Joseph is an excellent example of someone who lived a godly life. He refused to follow the sinful lifestyle of his wayward brothers or allow the general corruption of his day to tempt him to sin.

————— ❧ —————
**More chapters in
 Genesis are devoted
 to Joseph than to any
 other person.**
 ————— ❧ —————

W. H. Griffith Thomas, the well-known British Bible teacher and author, has commented on the value and importance of the story of Joseph from a fourfold standpoint: (1) it throws light on divine providence; (2) it supplies the reader with important historical information about the Hebrews; (3) it gives a splendid example of personal character in its portrayal of this man Joseph; and (4) it provides a striking series of pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The record of Joseph is part of a much larger purpose of God. When God confirmed His covenant with Abraham, He said, “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years” (Gen. 15:13). This refers, of course, to Israel’s bondage in Egypt. God’s method of getting the descendants of Abraham (Jacob’s family) to Egypt was through Joseph’s experiences.

The widely known Scottish preacher and author, W. Graham Scroggie, summed up Joseph’s life as follows: “We see him in three aspects: first, as the princely son; second, as the patient sufferer; and third, as the people’s savior.”

In our Scripture passage of Genesis 37:1-17, two main things are drawn to our attention regarding Joseph, the first being that he was loved by his father.

Loved by His Father (37:1-3)

Genesis 36, which concerns the generations of Esau, is something of a parenthesis in the overall story of Joseph’s life. Through all of these background details and events, God was preparing for the transformation of the household and the tribe into a nation.

The account opens when Joseph was seventeen years old (v. 2), always an age of great importance in a young person’s life. We also note from verse 2 that Joseph was shepherding the flock with his brothers. The sons with whom he was particularly associated were Bilhah’s sons, Dan and Naphtali (30:5-7), and Zilpah’s sons, Gad and Asher (30:9-13).

Joseph brought a “bad report” of his brothers to Jacob. Exactly what the bad report was about we don’t know. Nor do we know whether Joseph’s action was right or wrong. His first responsibility was to his father, and in this light he acted properly. It may be that Joseph brought in the report about

his brothers because he was ashamed that God’s name was being blasphemed among the inhabitants of the land. Or it may be that he was simply concerned for the family name which had been disgraced (cf. 34:30).

Jacob loved Joseph more than all his children because he was the son of his old age (vv. 3-4), and probably because he was Rachel’s son.* Jacob’s own experience of favoritism in his youth seems to have taught him nothing (Genesis 27). He doted on Joseph and showed his favoritism by giving him “a tunic of many colors.” This gesture marked him out as superior, expressing Jacob’s intention to make him preeminent above his brothers. A similar garment is described in 2 Samuel 13:18, a dress of Tamar, King David’s daughter, thus referring to royal apparel. We are not surprised at the way Joseph’s brothers reacted. This brings us to the second main point in our Scripture passage—namely, the fact that Joseph was hated by his brothers.

Hated by His Brothers (37:4-17)

Why did Joseph’s brothers hate him? Three reasons are given: (1) because of his evil report of them; (2) because of his father’s favoritism; and (3) because of his dreams. For all this they hated him with a growing hatred (see vv. 2, 4, 5, 8).

At this point we need to focus on two things, the first being *Joseph’s revelation of his dreams*. Joseph was already hated (v. 4). Now his brothers’ hatred of him was further fueled by the two dreams he had that were related to each other. The first dream clearly affirmed that Joseph was to have the right to rule over his brothers. The second dream affirmed his supremacy over the entire family. Jacob had no problem understanding the meaning of this second dream (cf. v. 10).

The second thing we note is *the family’s reaction to his dreams*. Joseph’s brothers not only hated him; now they were envious of him. However, Jacob

* In his commentary on Genesis, Ken Fleming writes: “His [Joseph’s] moral and spiritual standards were obviously higher than the others. He was called ‘the son of his old age,’ meaning he was a ‘wise son.’ In our idiom, we would say he was mature for his age. The phrase does not mean there was a large age gap between him and his older brothers; all eleven had been born in a seven-year period (Gen. 29:30-31:24).” Ken Fleming, *Genesis: From Creation to a Nation*, (Dubuque, IA: ECS Ministries, 2005) 343.

reminds us of Mary, the mother of Jesus. When she heard things about her infant son, she “kept all these things and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19). Jacob began to suspect that some divine purpose was involved in Joseph’s unusual dreams.

Evidently Jacob was anxious about his sons who were shepherding the flock at Shechem, where they had already disgraced his name (cf. 34:30). He therefore sent Joseph to check on them. Joseph immediately obeyed his father and traveled from Hebron to Shechem, about 50 miles away. He failed to find his brothers there, but with the help of a stranger he eventually located them at Dothan, another 15 miles away.

Joseph was quick to obey his father. The disobedience of children to their parents is a sure sign of the fragmenting of families. Children can affect the emotional life of their parents. Proverbs 10:1 says, “A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother.”

☞

**Only the grace of
God in one’s heart
and life is truly
able to overcome
the sin of envy.**

☞

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Among other things, it clearly illustrates the sin of man and the grace of God, the sin of envy being particularly stressed (cf. Psalm 37:1; 73:3; Romans 13:13). Envy is “the rottenness of the bones” (Prov. 14:30; see James 3:16), and there can be no peace when it is present. It is the root of many of our sins against others. Remember, it was for “envy” that the chief priests and elders of Israel delivered the Lord Jesus Christ to Pilate to be tried (Matt. 27:18). If God were first in our lives, there would be no envy (see Psalm 37:3-7 and 1 Corinthians 13:4). Only the grace of God in one’s heart and life is truly able to overcome this sin.

Envy is defined as “a feeling of discontentment and resentment aroused by contemplation of another’s possessions, qualities, or achievements, with a strong wish that they were one’s own.” Some may think of envy and jealousy as interchangeable terms, but there is a distinction between the two words.

“Envy consists largely of unhappiness over the success of others; in fact, it may even rejoice in the failure of others.

Jealousy, on the other hand, is the pain of losing what we have to someone else. Jealousy may even begin in love—a love so intense that any disruption of that love is met with violence. Jealousy has been defined as the torture of loving that which one no longer has the power to possess.”

—John D. Jess

Envy leads to anger, hatred, and even murder. There are many classic examples of it in the Bible. Consider the following: Cain’s anger and murder of his brother Abel (Gen. 4:4-8); Sarah’s envy of her handmaid Hagar which brought strife and division into Abraham’s family (Gen. 16:5-6; 21:9, 10); King Saul’s envy of David’s growing popularity (1 Sam. 18:8-9, 29; 20:31); Haman’s envy of Mordecai sitting at the king’s gate (Esther 5:13); the Babylonian princes’ envy of Daniel’s faultless character (Dan. 6:4); the Jews’ envy of the success of Paul and Barnabas’s ministry (Acts 13:45-50); and likewise of Paul and Silas’s ministry (Acts 17:1-9).

2. Another lesson we learn from Genesis 37 is the harm done to a family when one parent or the other favors a particular child. Rebekah’s favor of Jacob over Esau led her to trick her husband

<p>————— ❖ —————</p> <p>Just because someone comes from a divided home does not mean that he or she cannot become a godly person.</p> <p>————— ❖ —————</p>	<p>Isaac into giving Esau’s birthright to Jacob (Gen. 27:1-40). As a result, Jacob had to flee for his life. Sadly, the home was broken up and Rebekah never saw her son Jacob again. Unfortunately, sin has a way of repeating itself from one generation to another (see Exodus 20:5 and Numbers 14:18), as illustrated by Jacob being deceived by <i>his</i> sons (that we shall soon see).</p>
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It cannot be denied that environment has a big influence on the direction of one’s life. However, all too often it is used as an excuse for one’s sin and failure. Joseph came from a rough background, especially when we think of the unsavory character of his brothers. Nevertheless, he became one of the most godly examples we have record of in the Old Testament. Just because someone comes from a divided home, perhaps with a background of alcoholism or drug abuse, does not mean that he or she cannot become a godly person. Many have suffered physical, sexual, verbal, or psychological abuse who have, by God’s grace and His good hand, overcome

such obstacles and gone on to live productive and Christ-honoring lives. Have you allowed God's grace to give you the victory over problems of your past, whether they be a divided home, hatred, envy, or some kind of abuse?

JOSEPH

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EXAM BOOKLET
AK '10 (1 UNIT) JOS

STUDENT NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

ADDRESS

CITY, STATE, ZIP

COURSE GRADE: _____

INSTRUCTOR



Exam developed by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

A NOTE ON THE EXAMS

The exams are designed to check your knowledge of the course material and the Scriptures. After you have studied a chapter, review the exam questions for that lesson. If you have difficulty in answering the questions, re-read the material. If questions contain a Scripture reference, you may use your Bible to help you answer them. If your instructor has provided a single page Answer Sheet, record your answer on that sheet. This exam contains the following types of questions:

MULTIPLE CHOICE

You will be asked to write in the letter of the correct answer at the space on the right. Here is an example:

The color of grass is

- A. blue
- B. green
- C. yellow

 B

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Questions headed this way are designed to help you express your ideas and feelings. You may freely state your own opinions in answer to such questions.

RETURNING THE EXAM

See the back of this exam booklet for instructions on returning your exam for grading.

DO NOT PHOTOCOPY THESE EXAM PAGES

First Printed 2010 (AK '10), 1 UNIT

Reprinted 2012 (AK '10), 1 UNIT

ISBN 978-1-59387-109-3

Code: JOS

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Printed in the United States of America

CHAPTER 1 EXAM**JOSEPH, BELOVED AND HATED****EXAM GRADE**

Before starting this exam, write your name and address on the front of this Exam Booklet.

Directions: Read each question carefully and write the letter of the correct answer in the blank space on the right. Use the separate answer sheet if provided.

1. Of all the Hebrew characters in the Old Testament, one that best pictures Christ is
A. Abraham
B. Jacob
C. Joseph _____
2. We first meet Joseph when he was
A. 16 years old
B. 17 years old
C. 21 years old _____
3. Bilhah, who became one of Jacob's wives, was the mother of
A. Simeon and Judah
B. Dan and Naphtali
C. Reuben and Issachar _____
4. In Genesis 37 we learn that Joseph lived in
A. Canaan
B. Mesopotamia
C. Moab _____
5. Jacob gave Joseph a special
A. sweater
B. pair of sandals
C. colorful coat (tunic) _____
6. Joseph was hated by his
A. mother
B. brothers
C. father _____

7. In the dreams Joseph had, his brothers

- A. held a big party for him
- B. bowed down to him
- C. murdered him

8. Joseph went to look for his brothers from his home at

- A. Jerusalem
- B. Bethel
- C. Hebron

9. Joseph found his brothers at

- A. Dothan
- B. Bethlehem
- C. Beersheba

10. When parents favor one of their children over another

- A. it harms the family
- B. it helps the family
- C. it promotes healthy competition

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

What in your background or upbringing has God given you grace to overcome?
