

The Life of Joseph: Remembering the Presence and Providence of God

The story of the life of Joseph holds Bible-believing readers of all ages nearly spellbound. Indeed, the story includes magnificent insights into sublime elements of Bible theology -- the character of God, the remarkable and unexpected ways in which His promises and prophecies are fulfilled and unfolded as part of His divine plan, the way He works to preserve His people even while testing them, the way that He never leaves or forsakes those who put their hope in Him, and the way that He ever-graciously enables those who have fallen to be restored. In addition, the more human elements of the story intrigue us and invite our interest – Jacob’s “dysfunctional” family, the saga of intrigue that develops among the sons, the window into Egypt and some of the political life of the ancient Semitic world, etc.

Certainly the story is memorable and compelling, and together we find ourselves sinking low with Joseph in his trials and unjust treatment, and then rising together with him to exult in the God who is able to take what is meant for evil and transform it into good. The sense of rejoicing I personally feel is captured in a precious memory of seeing one of my young children, after hearing the account of Joseph revealing his identity to his brothers, sit upright in bed, and exclaim “Yes!” with great enthusiasm. Probably we all feel that way to a degree when God and those who have trusted Him are vindicated and not confounded or put to shame.

Taking a slower pace through the story invites the opportunity to savor what God does. As you study the story, remember the story of Joseph and his triumph is more importantly a story of God. As much as you are able, try to approach it as a first-time reader and allow these concluding pages of the book of Genesis to minister in repeated waves over you and your class.

When our church family studied through this story, we covered the lessons over a four-month period. Some of the lessons easily expand to cover multiple weeks. The lessons are based on a series of messages preached to our church family early in his ministry (1982), and they have been reworked and supplemented for use in a curriculum format.

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