



Viewfield Baptist Church

To enable people to become fully devoted
followers of Jesus Christ

Joseph Study Leaflet

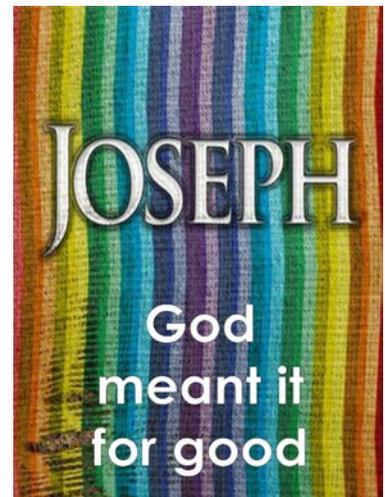
Sunday 9 June

Sermon 13
“We are family”
Genesis 42-43

This study guide will be used in our Small Groups, but can also be used by individuals.

You can download or listen to a recording of the sermon at this link:
<http://www.viewfield.org.uk/media/podcasts>

Leaflets about our small groups are available on the teabar. If you would like to join a small group, please speak to our Pastor, Rae, or to Pete Hutchison.



Viewfield Baptist Church

2 Viewfield Terrace | Dunfermline | Fife | KY12 7HZ
01383 620465 | office@viewfield.org.uk

Sermon 13 in Joseph series. Genesis 42-43. "We are family."

As we continue to journey with the story of Joseph we continue to hear the echo of the words: *"You meant it for evil but God meant it for good."* In this story the hidden hand of God is at work throughout working all things together for the good.

As we consider the story of Joseph we know that the hand of God is clearly at work, even although it is not always explicitly mentioned. How true is that in our own lives. Although we are not aware of it the hidden hand of God is working all things together for our good and his glory.

The story of Joseph operates at several levels. This helps us to see how God often works. He is often at work on different levels and through a variety of circumstances and people to accomplish a work in us.

"His ways are higher than our ways. He thoughts and higher than our thoughts."

Let's take comfort from the fact that he is on the throne. That he knows the beginning from the end. That he knows best. Let's trust in him.

Let's tune our ears afresh into this story and listen to the beautiful music of the wonder and workings of our Great God.

1/ A Fathers Dilemma Gen 42v29-38

We are told in **verse 29** that the brothers arrived back in Canaan after their first journey to Egypt.

We are also told in **verse 29** that when they see their Father *"they told him all that happened to them" (v30-34)*. They do tell Jacob the story but it is an abbreviated version of events. They miss out some important details. They don't tell their Father that they were imprisoned for three days, that they feared that this was a punishment for their treatment of Joseph, and that Simeon had been bound. They do not share the full story.

On hearing the brothers share their story, Jacob their Father faces a terrible dilemma. Does he send his youngest son, Benjamin to Egypt with his brothers so that Simeon can be released and that they may get trading opportunities and more food when required? Or does he refuse leaving Simeon in Egypt and with the possibility of starvation one the grain they have brought back runs out? It is very clear that Jacob does not trust his sons. Once before they had returned without a brother and pockets full of silver. Jacob is struggling to believe their explanation: he might well think that they have sold Simeon and stolen the grain. **READ v 35-36.**

Jacob has not had an easy time of it. He slumps into self-pity. *"Everything is against me."* However, he is not helping this family crisis situation. Insensitively he refers to Benjamin in 38 as his only son. (He favoured him because he believed he was the only surviving son of his favoured wife Rachel). Almost as we read these words, the coat of many colours is flashing before our eyes. He favoured Joseph and that had horrendous consequences. He has not learnt from his mistakes. May we be a God fearing people, aware of our failings as we are sensitive the Spirit, and repentant, seeking to turn from sin and live Christ like lives. Here before us we see a family in crisis. It is so sad to see the favouritism, mistrust and division. Sadly, all too often we see family breakdown, we see pain, hurt, bitterness, division, mistrust. One thing we learn from the story of Joseph is that there is the possibility of healing. There is hope. At this point in the story everything appears to be at stalemate. But time, and hunger, will change matters. The music continues to play as the hand of God is at work in all these different situations.

2/ A Family Decision Genesis 43v1-15

As we begin **Chapter 43** we are told that the famine was still severe in all the land v1. Jacob still hopes against hope that he can avoid sending Benjamin. He suggests to the brothers to go down and try and buy a little more grain v2.

This is a delicate situation and requires a family decision to be made. The brothers know that they have to take Benjamin with them, and they know this will hurt their Father enormously. They need to persuade him to give his permission and now the one who takes charge is Judah.

We often ask the question: Can people ever change? Let this next part of the drama be a challenge to us all. God can change and transform even the greatest sinner and most hard hearted of people. May that be an encouragement to us as we pray and witness to others. What a change we see in Judah. God has been at work in his life. He calmly and patiently explains the situation to his Father, **Gen 43v3-5**. He emphasises the urgency of the situation but also states that he will take personal responsibility for his youngest brother. **READ Gen 43v8-9**. Judah was putting his life on the line and getting his Father to face the facts.

The leadership of the brothers had been moving towards Judah ever since they had followed his plan to sell Joseph. **READ Gen 37v27**. However, after Judah's experiences of bereavement and humiliation in chapter 38, it has become obvious that the hand of the Lord has been at work in his life through those difficult events. He is a changed man. Now instead of leading the brothers into sin, his leadership gifts can be used more wisely. If you have a leadership gift use it wisely? People will follow you. Lead them to live in the light of the Lordship of Christ.

In the end Jacob reluctantly agrees to allow Benjamin to go with the brothers to Egypt. **V11: "if it must be then do this."**

However, despite all his faults Jacob here does show faith in God when in v14 he says: **"May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you."** He believes that God is ruler over all, and that he orders all things and that our lives are entirely in his hands. He has fears and doubts but yet trusts in the one who is God Almighty. He trusts in God the one who knows the beginning from the end.

Here we see Jacob face a test of faith that cuts to the heart. He follows in the footsteps of earlier Patriarchs where he comes to a point where he needs to commit his child to God. Abraham had to be willing to send Ishmael into danger (**21v8-14**), and to be willing to sacrifice Isaac (**Ch 22**); Isaac had to allow Jacob to flee not knowing if he would see him again. (**Ch 28v1-5**). And Jacob in turn has to let Benjamin go. However, what is encouraging is that having taking their hands of their children, these parents are eventually reunited with their child- God has, indeed, had his hand upon them.

Despite, his fear, worries and doubts, he trusted in God. Today's sermon is a call to reaffirm our faith in God. Not as an intellectual exercise but as a heartfelt commitment to our God. Jacob asks that God would grant them mercy before the man. As we read on in the story we see Joseph's compassion (literally mercy) for his brothers. Jacob's prayer is answered in how Joseph treats his brothers who have sinned against him. Joseph doesn't treat them as their sins deserve. Indeed he shows real mercy by inviting them to a bountiful banquet. Ultimately, in this story where the great symphony of God's providence is at work the real crescendo will be the moment of forgiveness and reconciliation.

As we think upon Jacob asking that the man would show them mercy, we picture another man hanging on a cross. He cried out: Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing. The Scriptures tells us that his death was the ultimate demonstration of God's love towards us. That while we were still sinners Christ died for us. **Romans 5v8**. **READ Ephesians 2v4-5**. Thanks be to God that he does not treat as our sins deserve but is merciful towards us.

As we read on in this story we are told that the brothers make their way to Egypt and when they arrive Joseph tells his steward that they must *Come Dine with me*. They are invited to a fabulous dinner **v16**. (This is the third point which we will consider next time). We think back to the Lord Jesus calling us to share in a meal. A meal where we eat bread and remember his body broken for us and drink wine and remember his blood shed for us.

So let's tune our ears to listen to the music of the great symphony of the providence of God. And let's reaffirm our trust in the one who is Almighty God.

Bible study questions

Icebreaker: "Describe an occasion when you took a step of faith."

1. Discuss the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God. Why is it such a comfort to the believer?
2. Name some of God's characteristics. Describe which are most precious to you.
3. What dilemma does Jacob face at this point in the story? Describe a time when you faced a dilemma. What helped you make the right decision?
4. Why is so important to tell the truth?
5. Describe the change in Judah at this point?
6. In what way does Jacob show great faith in God?
7. In what ways is it hard to have faith?
8. In what ways can we exercise faith in God? How can we grow our faith?

Application: "Take a step of faith this week."