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**The Road to
Repentance**

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Series: Joseph and the Sovereignty of God

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The Road to Repentance

Our precious Father, Creator, Sustainer, the One who spoke the worlds into being, the One who holds us in the palm of His hand with tender loving care, we worship You.

We come to You this morning, Father, so conscious of our need to be dependent upon You, in our personal lives, in our business lives, in our home lives. And we are so conscious of our need to be holy before Thee. We worship You.

And our prayer this morning, Father, is that You would send Your Spirit in great measure upon us, cleanse us, allow us to have the freedom in Your Spirit to let Your light shine through us.

We ask you, heavenly Father, now to take this time we spend together and take away from us all the extraneous thoughts that dominate our thinking and cause our thoughts to stray, and quietly open our spirits to Yours that we might receive truth.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.

Every so often in the class but not nearly often enough, we come to a place where we say we're almost through with something. That word almost gives us a lot of latitude. And as I said, it happens very seldom, but this morning is the next to the last episode in the life of this incredible living legend named Joseph. What a man. But most of all, when we look at the man, we cannot help but say what a God we have. We followed him this last 6 or 7 weeks with a spirit of amazement and some encouragement because we watched God work with him, sustain him, and equip him in ways which we relate to.

We saw him come from a family with so much favoritism that he was given this coat of many colors and it created problems

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with his brothers. We saw him as a victim hidden in a well, and we saw him as a captive trudging alongside some of Midianite traders on their way to Egypt, being sold into slavery for virtually nothing by his own family. We saw him as a slave in Potiphar's house. We saw him with an undeserved fate in prison where he was cast there for something he did not do. And then we saw him charged with the responsibility for the butler and the baker, and we watched as he met their needs and served them and they forgot.

Then last week we looked at his moment of truth. Here he was snatched from prison, as he was. The Bible says he combed his hair, shaved, got all cleaned up and stood before the most powerful man in Egypt and possibly in the whole world. And Pharaoh looked him in the eye and said, "Son, can you interpret dreams?"

And you remember without so much as a moment of hesitation, Joseph gave this incredible reply, "No, Sir, I can't, but my God can. Would you like to meet Him?" He said, "It is not in me." And that one statement, you remember, opened the door for us to understand what is in the heart of this man that makes him so different.

Joseph pulled back the curtain of glory and he said, "Pharaoh, meet Jehovah, the only One who can." And Joseph crawled up into his God's lap and let God interpret Pharaoh's dream. Oh, He used Joseph's mouth, but he was careful to remind Pharaoh that it wasn't him; it was God. And he gave all the glory to God. And then sure enough, Pharaoh gave all the glory to God. That's what happens when we give all the glory to God. Pharaoh then got out his little notebook and he wrote a job description for this new second in command in his country, the chief administrator of GFP, "God's Food Program". Here is his job description. If some of you are in personnel you might take note of this job description. It's not the kind we usually hand out. Verse 38 of chapter 41, in the book of Genesis,

Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit
of God? (Genesis 41:38b NKJV)

Then Pharaoh turned to Joseph and said, "I know who we'll get." Verse 39,

Inasmuch as God has showed you all this, there is none so
discerning and wise as you: (NKJV)

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It isn't you, it's God. And in verse 40,

Thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.
(Genesis 41:40)

Hello. Joseph, is that you? From the vanquished to the victor. From the prison to the palace. From servanthood to supremacy. In a moment of time the hand of God takes this faithful man and puts him on the pinnacle of success. He becomes the second most powerful man in all of Egypt. And one thing he knew was that it was not in him. Yet God had placed him in the place for which God had been preparing him for these thirteen years of persecution, difficulty and struggle.

So we are going to see what unfolds in the life of Joseph the ruler, the administrator. We are going to see him deal in what, perhaps is the greatest agricultural crisis in history. But more important than that, we are going to see Joseph, the man, dealing with perhaps one of the greatest tests of human character in history. Joseph, the exalted one, is brought by divine providence face to face with the very same brothers who had sold him into slavery, who would bow before him just as he predicted they would. What a story. We will look at it in four parts: The Day of Rejoicing, The Day of Reckoning, The Day of Revelation and The Way of Repentance.

THE DAY OF REJOICING

First we begin with the day of rejoicing, and we must never forget that Joseph is a type of Christ. When we look at the story of Joseph, we see an imprint on the pages of Scripture of little illustrations of what the Coming One, the Messiah, would be like. Remember that.

Secondly, remember as we go through this story that the brothers, in their relationship with Joseph, represent a picture of us, as believers, when we come to the Crowned One and seek forgiveness. And we'll learn a lot by watching God reveal principles through Joseph's life.

We've been doing that, haven't we? Two weeks ago we learned from Joseph the principle of the surrendered life when he said *that it is not in me*. In our last lesson we looked at Joseph as he explained the principle of glory. A few weeks ago, we looked at Joseph as he taught us how to be successful on the job. The

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following week or the week before he taught us how to accept the sovereignty of God.

This morning we are going to look at the issue of exaltation and we're going to see it all come together. All of these principles surface in this one man's life.

Matthew 23:11-12 is the first principle that you see underscored in Joseph's life in this last portion of the story.

Verse 11, Jesus is speaking,

But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

And whosoever shall exalt himself must be abased [brought low]; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

(Matthew 23:11,12)

This principle, very plainly written in Scripture, is 180 degrees opposite man's perspective. It says this: that if you are to find recognition in this life, you do not seek it; you seek Him. God will give you recognition *only when and only if it brings glory to His name*. Beloved, that is the opposite of the world's perspective.

Other principles include the "weakness principle" that we looked at earlier in this study where God would rather manifest His strength through our weakness, than share the glory for our strengths. But perhaps, the most beautiful principle of exaltation that we'll also see surface, is the principle that most of the crowns of acclaim He has for us are laid up in storage in eternity. Yet, if we suffer with Him here, we may be able to share the glory there, as we learned last week.

Joseph wraps it all into a package we see wrapped up in his life, all of these principles. You see, the time did come when God honored the innocent and convicted the guilty. He exalted Joseph and gave him a blessing in at least four areas. Aren't you kind of glad? Aren't you kind of tired seeing this poor guy getting beat up? I mean this is the good guy, the one that wears the white hat. And he has gotten beat up, and misused and abused in every possible way. Wouldn't it be neat to see God exalt him? Well, hang on, this is our chance.

Genesis chapter 41, beginning with verse 41,

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See I have set you over all the land of Egypt."

Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and

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put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain around his neck;

And he made him ride in the second chariot in which he had; and they cried before him, "Bow the knee": and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without thee no man will lift up his hand or his foot in the land of Egypt."

And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him a wife, Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. (Genesis 41:41-46)

Now those of us who are good in mathematics and those of you who aren't, can realize that he was 17 when he was sold by his brothers into slavery and now he is 30. So thirteen years had passed. Guess what? God's interpretation was right on. Look at verse 47,

And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls [lots of goodies].

And he [Joseph] gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same.

And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much [in great abundance], until he left numbering [measuring]; for it was with number [beyond measure].

(Genesis 41:50)

They stopped measuring and their computers went out of whack and they couldn't keep inventory there was so much grain. It was beyond measure.

Verse 50,

And unto Joseph were born two sons before the famine came, (Genesis 41:47-50a)

Joseph's first son was called Manasseh, which means to forget. The Scripture says Joseph named him that way because God had caused him to forget all the tribulations from his father's house. In verse 52, his second son was named Ephraim, which means to be fruitful, because God had made him to be fruitful in

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the land of his affliction.

So, this one who seemingly had suffered every injustice, had reached a point in his heart where there was no bitterness toward man or bitterness toward God. He had reached a point where he was totally helpless without God, and totally yielded to God working through him. Now, he was ready to be a leader.

Those are the qualities. He came to a place of total acceptance of his circumstances, total acceptance of his weaknesses, total awareness of God's sovereignty, and total awareness of his need to be dependent upon God. And, Beloved, when God chooses to bless those who are not seeking the glory, get out of the way. He does it in a big way.

So Pharaoh turns to this young Hebrew prisoner. (Now remember his credentials: he's a prisoner, he's only 30 years old, and he is a hated Hebrew. As we'll see in a minute, so hated were they that it was an abomination for the Egyptians to sit down and eat at the same table. And Pharaoh took him because the Spirit of God dwelt in him and elevated him to second in command.) Pharaoh puts a ring on Joseph's hand. This signet ring was something worn by royalty and any time it was pressed down it made the impression that was the same thing as the king's signature. So Joseph literally had the authority to sign the king's name.

He placed upon him a robe of white linen, the kind that was only worn by those in positions of spiritual and physical authority. He placed around his neck a golden chain, the kind that only royalty wore. He put him in a chariot just behind his own and caused all the men and women in the country to bow down their knee to him. He gave him rule over the entire kingdom. He gave him a bride, a bride who was to bear him sons. He gave him a task to bring in the harvest before the time of reckoning. And he gave him all the power at his disposal to bring it to pass. I trust, Beloved, by now that you see once again, this incredible etching in Scripture through the life of Joseph. Surfacing is a picture of the Messiah who was to come.

You think about it. He who was given the Father's ring so that He was able to say with assurance, "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you." He was clothed in the white linen of righteousness bearing the jewels of authority in this life and in the life to come. He's been prepared for that day

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when the chariot of His glory will descend and every knee will bow. By His Spirit he has perfect rule over the kingdom in men's hearts. He has been given a bride, even a bride who has borne Him countless sons. And with those sons, will He not produce a harvest that is plenteous? Though the laborers are few, He has the power at His disposal to bring the task to completion.

Jesus is our Joseph and Joseph was our Jesus. He was sold for a few pieces of silver, cast into a pit and suffered in the dungeons of life. But, one day will reign. He is our Joseph and we are His.

Beloved Christian listening the morning, some of you seem to have suffered so needlessly in life. Some of you, by the world's standards, have been treated so unjustly and, yet, you have learned to graciously respond, and to serve others in the dungeons of life without recognition. Beloved, there is good news for you. You may even yet in this life, and you will certainly in the life to come, taste the sweetness of godly exaltation. You will see the fruit of your pain borne in the beauty of lives around you.

May I remind you it was dark in the prison house just seconds before Pharaoh called Joseph's name. But in a moment, Joseph's whole life was changed. Your exaltation may come on this earth, or it may not. Most of it will not. But, Beloved, your King is coming soon for you and He is coming soon. When He does, the bitterness of all of life's injustices will blossom into the fragrance of God's grace, and the very hours you wept will have produced the most priceless garments of glory. As the song says, "It will be worth it all when we see Jesus." Those trials will cease when we see Him. Truly, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Joseph had his day of rejoicing and so will we.

THE DAY OF RECKONING

But, Beloved, there also has to be a day of reckoning. Joseph's brothers seemingly have gone scot-free. They sold their brother, lied to their father, and went on about their business as though nothing had happened. They pretended to be faithful sons and loyal brothers; they lived a lie. While Joseph toiled in the dungeon, they married, had families, tended their flocks, and probably were deacons in the local church. You say, "Is there no justice?" Oh, yes, my friend, there is justice. "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. But remember the train of

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justice that God has, runs on a different time clock than ours. The Master Engineer has an express train called “Judgment”. It passes the station from time to time, but one day, it will make its final run. No one on the passenger list will be left behind. It will go at break-neck speed around the curve of eternity, there to derail and go tumbling into the darkness below forever.

My friend, the day of reckoning does come. We see it pictured in this story when Joseph’s brothers face seven tests from God. In this case, they repent and are forgiven. God has not forgotten, though. God is engineering a plan to bring them to Himself. And I want to remind you His goal is not retribution; His goal is restoration by way of repentance.

Now let me ask everyone here this morning a personal question. Fortunately, you don’t have to answer me, but please answer God. Are you just waiting for God to get the one who got to you? Oh, I know you prayed for it. But did you pray, “Go get them, God?” Then you don’t have the mind of Christ. You see, God wants to get them, but He wants to get to their hearts with His love. That is why you pray for your enemies. That is why you bless them. That is why you do good to them.

So the curtain opens, and twenty years have passed since Joseph and his brothers parted company on the plains of Dothan. Thirteen years passed before Joseph met with Pharaoh. Seven years of drought have come and gone. Joseph now is 37 years old. And we tune in again in chapter 41, verse 55 and we begin to read,

And when all the land of Egypt was famished [the McDonald’s had closed down, the Burger King’s shut down, there was no food], the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, “Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.” (Genesis 41:55)

(Joseph will take care of you. Whatever he says, do.)

What a picture again of our Joseph, the bread come down from heaven, Jesus Christ, who alone can fill the hungry soul and satisfy our longing hearts. Verse 56 says that the famine was worldwide and people came from everywhere to Joseph. You see the picture again as the word went out to the Gentile nations to every kindred, tribe and tongue. Chapter 42 opens and we see what happens.

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Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, “Why are you standing around staring at each other?”

“Behold, I heard there was corn in Egypt. Go get some. We don’t want to die of starvation.”

(Genesis 42:1,2 paraphrase)

Verses 3 and 4,

And Joseph’s ten brothers went down to buy corn from Egypt.

But Benjamin, Joseph’s brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren, lest per adventure, mischief befall him.

(Genesis 42:3,4)

Jacob said, “I don’t want to go through that again.”

And verse 5,

And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those who came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

And Joseph was governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: And Joseph’s brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth.

(Genesis 42:5,6)

You had to go through Joseph to get there. You see the picture? There was no other way. That was the only way. And they bowed down before him with their faces to the earth. Fancy that?

Does it remind you of anything like 20 years before? Remember that presumptuous little dreamer who said his brothers would one day bow down before him when he approached them on the plains of Dothan, and they said, “Behold, the dreamer.” He was the dreamer indeed. Here their eyes were not yet opened, but here they were on their knees, paying their respects to the pesky little youngster who had owned that coat of many colors.

Now this passage this morning is far too intricate and too lengthy for us go into details. So, at this point in time I don’t know how many of you have those VCR’s that have a double speed on them but you can hit play and play again and it goes twice as fast. Well we’re going to do that this morning so hang on. We’re going double speed.

God begins to test Joseph’s brothers. The first test was the drought. They got hungry, and then all ten of them went for

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bread as their father suggested. The second test was at the hand of Joseph and on down the line, the next six. Now I don't know if you can picture this or not. But here are thousands or hundreds of thousands of people, I don't know how many, coming from all over the world into Egypt to try to get food and they all had to go through Joseph. And all of a sudden here comes these ten brothers in verse 7.

And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spoke roughly to them; and he said to them, "Whence come ye?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan to buy food." [We came from the land of Canaan. We're hungry.]

And Joseph knew [recognized] his brethren, but they knew not him [did not recognize him].

And Joseph remembered the dreams he dreamed of them, and he said unto them, "Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come [to see our weaknesses]."

And they said unto him, "Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come."

"We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are not spies."
(Genesis 42:7-11)

The inference here is that one man would not send all ten of his boys to spy out a land.

And they said, "Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not [dead so they thought]."
(Genesis 42:13)

How would you like to have been Joseph about now? Isn't it good that we weren't? Joseph retains his composure and accuses his brothers of being spies. And he had a plan. The first stage of his plan was a sequential pattern to bring these men to repentance. He had to go through, like in slow motion, the same kinds of circumstances that got them into trouble in the first place. Now you watch for it. The first thing he does is to see how they would respond to the welfare of the younger brother. That is what got them into this mess in the beginning twenty years before. Now, Benjamin, was the one who held such an esteemed place; he was the one that was left. Here was the plan. Joseph said, "I'll tell you what I'm gonna do. One of you go home and get your baby brother; and the others are to stay and wait. In

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the meantime, I'm going to throw you into the hoosegow and let you sit in prison." So for three days they stayed in prison and in verse 18 he let them out and said,

And Joseph said unto them the third day, "This do, and live; for I fear God:" (Genesis 42:18)

It was an unusual statement for the second in command of the Egyptian nation. So he said, "I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'll keep Simeon (the meanest of the lot), and I'll send the others of you home for Benjamin, this brother of yours." Now verse 21 is a pivotal verse. Remember this. They don't know Joseph. They have no idea Joseph is alive. This is the first thing they say,

And they said to one another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother [Joseph that is], in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought [begged] us, and we would not hear; ..." (Genesis 42:21)

Do you begin to see their problem? Unconfessed sin—twenty years of it.

"...therefore, is this distress come upon us". (continued)

Now their reasoning was that twenty years ago they did a bad thing to their brother and never made it right and God was going to get them. Verse 22,

And Reuben answered them saying, "Spake I not unto you, saying, 'Do not sin against the child;' and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required." (Genesis 42:22)

Reuben said, "I told you so. Here comes the reckoning, an eye for an eye. God's going to get us." Verse 23,

And they did not know that Joseph understood them; for he spake to them by an interpreter [so they wouldn't know].

And he [Joseph] turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes [and sent them on their way]. (Genesis 42:23,24)

Do you see what's happening? Watch carefully. For the first time in twenty years, they took a hard look at what they had done. Joseph, speaking through an interpreter understood every word. Moved to tears, he excused himself and wept over the miracle God was about to perform, but he did not do anything to get in God's way. He let it run its course. I don't think we would

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have done that. He maintained his composure. He kept Simeon, and sent the rest home. Then he decided to test their integrity. He put in their sacks of corn, the money they had paid for the corn. They had no idea he had done it. When they got home the food was there and so was the money.

So they went home. Papa Jacob didn't warm up to plan "B" sending Benjamin back. Jacob said, "Wait a minute. I lost one son that way. (The inference here says he never did believe that it was really an accident.) So no deal, Benjamin stays."

Simeon meanwhile, gets to stay in jail, just as Joseph had. He probably by now began to wonder if he hadn't been abandoned as whole year went by. The other brothers stayed home and ate all the cornbread they could eat. But about a year went by and Jacob's Grocery Store became empty again. The corny inventory went down to zero and he took another hard look at the circumstances. Meanwhile, Reuben and Judah have both gone to Dad and pledged their lives as collateral if Benjamin doesn't return. And Reuben even pledged his children's lives. And finally, Dad gives in and says, "We have no other choice. Go back to this guy in Egypt, whoever he is, and let him meet Benjamin."

So they take Benjamin and double the money that was returned in their sacks hoping to appease this guy and they arrive in Egypt. Joseph sees that they're coming and sends his servant to meet them and he invites them to dinner. He puts on the sterling silver and the crystal goblets. A whole year has gone by. Now if you were Joseph, can't you imagine what went on in your mind during that year? Don't you know that Satan had whispered in Joseph's ear saying, "You blew it again?" Can you imagine? "You had them in the palm of your hand. And, by the way, Joseph, your Dad has probably died by now. You missed your only chance." Can't you just hear it? And can't you just hear Joseph humble himself and say, "But wait a minute. God, this is what you told me to do, nothing else matters."

So the brothers return with Benjamin with them. They accept Joseph's invitation. They bow down and Joseph begins speaking.

And he [Joseph] asked them of their welfare, and he said, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spake? Is he yet alive?"

They answered, "Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive." And they bowed down their heads, and

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made obeisance [worshipped].

And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me?" 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.

And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, "Set on bread. [Serve the meal.]"

Then they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marveled at one another [as if to say, "What is happening here?"].

And he took and he sent messes [servings] unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him.

(Genesis 43:27-34)

Now Benjamin wasn't hungry, but he did this to test whether their jealousy still existed over favoritism, the same test that started it all, remember? So he gives them the grain and he plays another trick on them. He takes his treasured cup that belongs to his office and hides it in Benjamin's sack. He lets them get just outside the city limits and he sends one of his CIA to catch them and say, "Wait a minute. The boss's cup is missing and here it is in Benjamin's sack." Now think about it with me for a minute. They have three choices. Choice number 1 is they can murder the steward he sent out for them and head for home. Choice number 2 is they can say, "Gosh, we don't know what got into our younger brother but you can have him", and go home. Or choice number 3, they can do what they did in chapter 44, verse 13, the key verse in the whole story in the life of Joseph.

Then they [the brothers] rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass [donkey], and returned to the city [to Joseph to face the music.]

(Genesis 44:13)

It's called repentance. They turned around and went back—

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the turning point. Joseph simply states his sentence, “Benjamin, you stay here and you guys can go home. It’s the perfect chance for them to escape. Verse 18,

Then Judah came near unto him, and said, “Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord’s ears and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh.

“My lord asked his servants, saying, “Have ye a father, or a brother?’

“And we said unto my lord, ‘We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.’

“And thou said unto thy servants, ‘Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.’

And we said to my lord, ‘The lad can’t leave his father, if he should leave his father, his father would die.’

“And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.

“And our father said, ‘Go again, and buy us a little food.’

“And we said, ‘We can’t go down: if our youngest brother be with us.’

“And thy servant, my father said unto us, ‘You know that my wife bear me two sons:

And the one went out from among me, and I said, ‘Surely he is torn in pieces;’ and I saw him not since:

‘And if you take this also from me, and mischief befall him, you shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.’

“Now, therefore, when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad’s life;

It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. [He’ll die; do you want that on your conscience?]

For thy servant became surety unto my father, saying, ‘If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father forever.’

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Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad [Benjamin] go up with his brethren.

For how shall I go up to father, and the lad be not with me? Lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come to my father. (Genesis 44:18-34)

Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, "Cause every man to go out from me." And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known to his brethren.

And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, "I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?" And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, "Come near to me, I pray you." And they came near. And he said, "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.

They couldn't believe what was happening. He said, "Come here. I am your brother, the one you sold into Egypt." Verse 5 is a key verse; memorize it.

"Now therefore be not be grieved, or angry with yourselves, that you sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." (Genesis 45:1-5)

This is the point in the story where the next lesson begins. Beloved, if your heart isn't beginning to be moved, your heart is concrete. The heart of God is being manifested in so many ways. But I want to close with two thoughts. First, the parallel between the pattern of behavior of these brothers and the pattern God expects of us where repentance is concerned—the six steps to repentance. And, second, we'll look at the very, very last, the issue of how God responds to us the way Joseph did to his brothers once they repent.

Six steps to repentance

1- Things had to get tough. The pressure of life's circumstances that gets the brothers' attention. Not always the case, Beloved, but most of our lives when the food is plentiful and life is uncomplicated and everything is going well, God just has a hard time getting our attention. And we're able to shove to the

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back of our subconscious minds this matter of unconfessed sin the way Joseph's brothers did. They lived a lie that was buried under a mountain of hypocrisy. God had to do something to get their attention. And so He does so often with us. Sometimes it is only when things get tough that we look around and say, "Oh, sin."

2- The burden of guilt that was there all along. (Maybe some of you can relate.) In chapter 42:18, Joseph calmly says, "I fear God",

and all he had to do was mention name of God and they couldn't handle it. In verse 21, the brothers say to each other, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." Guilty? That was twenty years ago and they didn't know he was still alive. But the very thought of God, and that boatload of unconfessed sin comes rushing to the surface.

3- The first bad thing that happens, they accrued to the heavy hand of an angry God. The Scripture says that, "the wicked flee when no man pursues." If you are carrying a load of unconfessed sin, you fear every storm cloud and view every circumstance and think, *God is out to get me.* Verse 28 tells us that when the brothers found the money in their sacks, they cried, "*What is this that God has done unto us?*" Get the picture?

4- They finally got desperate and finally faced the music. They agreed to give their own lives, if necessary, for Benjamin's (as though they could atone for what they had already done). So often we'll do the same thing. We'll come to a position of sensitivity to sin and we begin to become convicted and think, *if I just go to church or if I can get busy doing God's work, everything will be alright. I can atone for that.* But we always fall short of the glory of God.

5- They give in and surrender in chapter 44:16. They accept themselves as guilty, not for this crime because they were innocent of that one; but they abandon themselves to Joseph's mercy and say, "What shall we say? What shall we speak? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants. We are yours; do with us as you please." What a memory verse. And then in one beautiful picture we come to #6.

6- Their concern now shifts to the heart of their heart. No longer are they concerned about their welfare, they are concerned

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with their brother's welfare. Having repented, they never, ever want to break their father's heart again.

You may be without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, or maybe you are a Christian who is out of fellowship with God over unconfessed sin that has been pushed to the back of your mind. Yet, your heart is torn apart as it has crystallized in all forms of guilt; and you are shadow boxing constantly with the circumstances of life, that always make you feel that God is out to get you. Every stroke of darkness that fate paints into your life makes you just want to do more, anything. Beloved, the answer is to confess to a God of love. He is waiting. All He wants you to do is come to Him and say, "I was wrong; please forgive me."

It is a life that finally falls down before Him and abandons itself into His arms and says, "Do with me whatever You choose." Do you know what God will do? He will do what Joseph did. He will forgive you. He will cleanse you. He will give you a new beginning. And, hopefully, the only thing that will ever matter in your life after that is that you will never, ever want to break the Father's heart again.

So the brothers portray us as they come to repentance, Beloved. But let's look at Joseph as he represents the heart of the Father as he responds.

1- Joseph weeping. In chapter 42:24, He turned from them and wept. In chapter 43:30, he entered his chamber and wept. In chapter 45:1, he cried. In chapter 45:2, he wept aloud and everyone heard it. That is how God feels about our sins. It breaks His heart. He loves us so much that He weeps for us. He is not on the battlefield, trying to find a way to destroy us; He is in the inner chamber, weeping for us, pleading that we might return to Him. Oh, Beloved, the love of God is the dominant characteristic of a God of love. How can we not look at that cross and see anything else?

2- Joseph waiting. Do you ever wonder at how long this process took? Twenty years for Joseph. And look at how long he patiently tests his brothers. Everything he was doing hurt him more than it did them. But he waited and he waited and he waited because that was best. And I don't know how long God has been waiting for some of you. But by God's grace the wait can end.

3- Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. And that is what

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God is waiting to do for us. When we have come full circle in repentance, He takes the blinders from our eyes and we see Him as He is. We recognize Him and cry out, "He is alive." Joseph is alive after all.

4- The restoration and the unity, as brothers are reunited with brothers and children reunited with fathers. We see the miracle of a plan. In our next lesson, we'll begin to look again at the conclusion of all of it.

But, Beloved, if you have never come to Jesus, aware of your sins, aware of your guilt, with no claim to salvation apart from Him, you can do that right now. You can lay yourself at His feet and receive Him even as He has received you. If you do, He will open your eyes and you will know Him and you will be His forever.

But there is another group. Perhaps some of you here are Christians and have been running for a long time. Oh, you come to church when you have to. Maybe you've gotten very busy in the church, but unconfessed sin is eating you alive. It may be something that happened twenty years ago. It may be a relationship that happened years ago that's never been made right. When every blade of grass that moves makes you jump as though God is out to get you, Beloved, God is out to get you, but not to destroy you. He wants to restore you, to the kind of fellowship and intimacy that will make your life have meaning.

Maybe God is speaking to some of us who have allowed things into our lives and just left them there so long, that like Joseph's brothers, have shoved them out of our consciousness only to see them surface when circumstances make us edgy. We flinch with guilt, often, false guilt, and we scarcely realize the power has gone. Maybe some of you here need to make restitution or make restoration in some way that you have put off and put off. And you have resisted so long that you have forgotten what it is like to be *really* whole. Wouldn't it be wonderful, Beloved, if you were to so clean before God that the motivating drive in your life is no longer to flee the Master's discipline, but rather to never again break the Master's heart?

Beloved, that is how you know your heart is right before God. The fellowship is so sweet that you would rather die than break His heart. Jesus, our Joseph, is waiting for you. He's weeping, He's waiting, He's longing for you to come to Him. How long must He wait? I would remind you, in closing, that no sin is greater

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than He is. No life is beyond the grasp of His love. You do not need to live any longer under the burden of guilt. Jesus, our Joseph, is waiting and waiting for you. With this we close.

JESUS OUR JOSEPH WAITS

Oh, blessed Lord, our Joseph,
How Your dear heart must break
As we who've sold You by the way
No real confessions make.

We try to cover up our sins
We try, but You won't let us,
And when we hear guilt's footsteps near
We cry, "God's out to get us!"

We run, we weep, we try to do
Whatever seems to ease us,
But deep within, a vacuum lies
So nothing seems to please us.

Until one day, the Son's light dawns
And suddenly we see
You only ask that we repent,
The rest is up to Thee.

And as we fall before Your face
And cry out, "It is o'er!"
We softly hear you whisper,
"That's all I've waited for."

And looking up into Your face
We see our God in tears,
Your broken heart has longed for us
And wept for us for years.

And all You wanted us to do
Was cry out, "God forgive."
So You could dry our tears (and Yours)
And we could start to live.

Oh, God, our Joseph,
May this moment we confess our sin
And pray, by grace, to never break
Our Father's heart again!

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Let's pray.

Our Father and our God,

In this moment, this holy moment, may Your sweet Spirit touch the fibers of many of our hearts and surface the things that have caused us, perhaps for years, to live on the outskirts of the city of Christian Joy.

May this moment, may this day, all of it come to its glorious conclusion as we, like Joseph's brothers, rush into Your arms and say, "Forgive". And You with outstretched arms cry out, "Forgiven". May we enjoy the wholeness and the holiness of lives that have been cleansed and renewed, refreshed and prepared to be vessels You can use.

Oh, precious God, our Joseph, may this morning be a time of repentance and a time of restoration for many.

*In the Name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we ask it,
Amen.*

For Focus and Application

1- Explain in detail what you think Jesus means when He says, "He that exalts himself must be humbled." How does He do that? Why does He do that? Why is pride so repugnant to God?

2- Review the life story of Joseph, and find as many portraits of Jesus as you can. Find New Testament references to verify your findings. Pray and thank God for the biographical photographs of our Lord in the Old Testament. Why did He do that? How can those "types" be an encouragement to us?

3- Try to imagine being Joseph as his brothers approached the first time. What thoughts would have crowded your mind? What character qualities do you think he exhibited in this lesson. Could you have taken the chance and waited a year for them to return? Would you have justified it, and raced off to find them? How could Joseph be so confident?

4- Why did Joseph hide the fact that he was crying? Why was he crying? What was God doing in Joseph's life at that moment?

5- Go through each of the tests Joseph put his brothers through. Ask yourself what you think God was doing through

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these tests. If Joseph had simply revealed himself at first, would the end result have been the same? Why can't we be that patient when God is working on our children, our disciples, our marriages?

6- Examine the "six steps to repentance" found on pages 17 and 18. Take them one by one and make personal application:

- a- Do we tend to suppress the need for repentance until trouble comes? Why? What steps can we take to overcome that?
- b- Is there unconfessed sin in your life or restitution that has never been made? Is this at the root of an unsettled spirit? Is it affecting your prayer life? Is it worth it? Why not purpose now to deal with it today.
- c- Do you blame every bad thing that happens on the punishing hand of God? Could that be a symptom of unconfessed sin in your life? Ask God.
- d- Once you surrender and repent, what usually happens to your perspective? Why is it we fight it so long?

7- Do you see God as we saw Joseph? He was weeping. He was waiting. He was longing to reveal Himself. Satan wants your concept of God to be one of harsh judgment devoid of grace. Ask God to set you free to receive his forgiving love.

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