

FREE

Lessons from the Exodus

Into Egypt (*Genesis 37-50*)

1. As Genesis 37 begins, we meet the family at the center of the Exodus, really the family at the centre of salvation history. God promised to bless the nations through Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) - ultimately through salvation by faith (Galatians 3:8) - and that promise passed from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob and then on through his twelve sons. When we meet them though, they seem more like characters in *Days of our Lives* than founders of the faith. Read Genesis 37:2-5. **Why do you think Jacob (Israel) loved Joseph more than his other sons? Was he wise to heap so much affection on him? How does favoritism like this affect family dynamics?**

2. Now read Genesis 25:28 in light of Jacob's favoritism. **Where do you suppose he got it from? What patterns are you setting for the next generation?**

3. One day, Jacob sent Joseph off to check in with his brothers who were out caring for the flocks. Read Genesis 37:18-24 and 25-28. **What's the bitter irony of Judah's words in verse 27?** (Note that there is already in-fighting and disunity amongst the twelve tribes of Israel. This will continue throughout the Old Testament).

4. In Egypt, Joseph was sold to Potiphar, the captain of the guard. He served Potiphar well but was jailed when Potiphar's wife framed him for sexual assault). Joseph's life just got 'worse and worse' and yet look at what 39:21 says - 'the LORD was with him.' **What does that tell you about God's presence in the experience of trials? Do trials mean that God's not there?**

5. Joseph was eventually released from prison and elevated to a position of tremendous authority when God enabled him to interpret Pharaoh's dreams of famine. The Pharaoh made Joseph his second-in-command and commanded him

to prepare the nation for seven lean years. This famine reached all the way to Canaan and Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy food. Joseph eventually reveals that he is their long-lost (victimised) brother. Now that the secret's out, what will Joseph do? Seek vengeance? Pay them back? He's the vice-president of the world's superpower and they're less than refugees in his country. What's he going to do? **What would you do?**

6. Read 45:4-8. How does Joseph interpret the trials of his life? In his view, who sent him to Egypt? To what end? Are we willing to be used in that way? If we can look back and realize that God was at work in our trials, how can that deepen our faith in the midst of those trials?

7. Joseph spared his brothers, but they weren't convinced that they were in the clear. Read Genesis 50:15-20. What assurance does Joseph give to his brothers? What does it take to forgive like that?

*"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Gen. 50:20). Be careful not to water this down. It does not say, "God used it for good" or "God turned it for good." It says, "God meant it for good." They had an evil purpose. God had a good purpose. God didn't start cleaning up halfway through this sinful affair. He had a purpose, a meaning, from the beginning. From the start, he meant it for good. – John Piper, *Coronavirus and Christ*.*

8. What does this episode teach us about human freedom and the sovereignty of God? How does Jesus' death on our behalf echo this principle?

Through something wrong done to him God did something good for other people. The supreme example is the story of the wrong done to Jesus. In Joseph's story and Jesus' story, at least, it is on the large scale, in events that have universal implications, that God coolly takes the most wicked of human acts and turns them into acts that can achieve something. -- John Goldingay (*Old Testament for Everyone - Genesis*).