

Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt." (Genesis 45:4)

Forgiving God, your mercies are new every morning. Thank you for your forgiveness of our sins and restoring us to newness of life. Help us to not seek vengeance but to seek loving our neighbor as ourselves. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Introduction

Young Joseph had been sold into slavery by his jealous brothers. But God was with him. When God revealed that a great famine would take place, Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of the preparations. Joseph met his brothers again when they came to Egypt to buy food.

Read: Genesis 45:4-20, 25-28

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The Biblical Context

The Pentateuch (the first section of Scripture) tells the story of Israel's ancestors. Scripture is honest about the real life struggle of this family, not hiding the sin and jealousies they dealt with. They were not some false ideals or perfect examples; they were real people.

In God's wisdom, the misfortune of being sold off to slavery was not the end for Joseph. Elevated to leadership in the land, Joseph used his position in Egypt to save his family. The Book of Genesis concludes with the family of Israel moving to Egypt, where Joseph provided them a new home. This corresponds to the time in Egyptian history known as the Hyksos Dynasty (16th and 15th Centuries B.C.) and the rule of the Canaanite Shepherd Kings.

Over time, the Israelites entered a long period of slavery in Egypt, summarized briefly in Exodus 1-2.

Discussion Questions

1. Go back and read Genesis 37:1-4. Why did Joseph's brothers dislike him so much? According to Genesis 37:25-28, what did they do to get rid of him? What did they tell their father (v. 29-35)?
2. Genesis 39-41 recounts that Joseph was a slave in Egypt and was imprisoned on false charges before he came to his place of power in Egypt. What led to his high position? What do you think sustained Joseph through all his difficult times? Can you say the same for yourself?
3. Read Genesis 41:46-49, 53-57. How was Joseph responsible for Egypt surviving the famine? What do you think was happening in the land of Canaan? How did all this work together in God's plan to bring Joseph's brothers to Egypt?
4. Joseph's brothers spoke to him on two separate trips they made to Egypt. What are some of the reasons you think they didn't recognize their brother?
5. In verses 45:4-20, why was Joseph unable to control himself emotionally? Do you think these were tears of sadness, anger, or joy? How do you think you would have felt if you were Joseph?
6. Even though his brothers were mean to him, God used Joseph's situation for good. What does Joseph say was God's plan (v. 45:7)? In a similar way, how does God work through us to serve the needs of our world? Give some examples.
7. What message did Joseph send to his father, Jacob (v. 9-11)? In what land did Joseph want his family to settle? Why do you think Pharaoh gave his permission for all this?
8. Read Leviticus 19:17-18. In what way(s) does God command us here to act like Joseph? What are we called to do and not do? What people quoted this same verse in Mark 12:31, Galatians 5:14, and James 2:8?