

**GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Lesson 30. (Gen chapter 41:56-43:38). For lesson copies, go to <http://www.montgomerychurch.org/resources8.html>**

**Introduction/Review:** In Genesis, we see the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Genesis chapters 12-36) raise up a people (Israel), and empower the 3 Patriarchs to accomplish His Purpose. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all heed God’s Call; even though their responses were often by their own means and in their own way. The story continues through the life and (mis)fortunes of Jacob’s/Israel’s favorite son, Joseph with the initial picture of him as a teenage spoiled brat who tattles on his brothers and who has dreams picturing him as superior to both his elder siblings and his parents – character traits which annoy his brothers so much that they take actions to get rid of him (37:18; 25-28). Transformation occurs. The Joseph who becomes a slave in Egypt differs greatly. He no longer is content to elevate himself; instead, he is concerned with the fortunes of others. His transformation is influenced partly by circumstance, but most importantly by God who is with him but never speaks directly to him. These final chapters will confront us squarely with 2 powerful theological themes: God’s Providence and reconciliation.

**Read Chapter 41:56 – 42:14:** Jacob’s sons, minus Benjamin, travel to Egypt to buy grain since the famine predicted by Joseph (41:28-39) has struck in Canaan also. Upon their arrival, what happens? Briefly discuss.

- Specifically, what does Joseph recall (re-read 37:5-8), what does he accuse his brothers of, and what do they reply in response? On a physical level, what do you think is happening? On a spiritual level, what do you think is beginning to emerge? Discuss.

**Read 42:15-20:** Joseph proposes a “test” for them to prove they are not spies.

- What does Joseph propose?
- Note the time frame in 42:17-18, and then re-read Joseph’s interpretation of dreams in 40:9-23. What similarities strike you? According to 42:18, what sways Joseph toward his final decision regarding the “fate” of his brothers? If you were his brothers, what might be going through your mind after this exchange? Discuss.

**Read 42:21-38:** Now we begin to glimpse beyond the outer façade of this “Egyptian Lord” who has power over the Hebrew petitioners. What changes do you sense are occurring among the brothers and within Joseph himself? Briefly discuss.

- Re-read 42:26-28. What does Joseph do and how do the brothers react? More specifically, what is revealed regarding how they perceive their fortunes or misfortunes with regard to God’s blessings or withholding of blessings? Do you see your lives within that same context? Discuss.

**Read 43:1-15:** The famine remains so severe that the family must return to Egypt for more supplies. Jacob finally relents on Benjamin accompanying the brothers.

- What does Judah do in this situation (re-read verses 8-9)? Compare his previous actions in 37:23-27. What transformation, if any, do you see taking place in Judah? Discuss.
- What does Israel do in response to Judah’s offer? What lesson do you draw as a parent that is helpful to you today? Discuss.

**Read 43:16-23:** As the brothers present themselves to Joseph, they are then taken to Joseph’s house, where they now leap to an assumption.

- What do they think is about to happen to them and what do they do about it?
- The steward replies to their concerns with an interesting statement. What significance, if any, do you see in the steward’s response? Discuss.

**Read 43:24-32:** Joseph returns home. Note that the brothers bow twice, vv 26, 28. Now re-read 37:5-11. Someone has written that all lives are lived within a Divine – human drama. Do you see evidence to support or refute this statement in these verses? What implication do you draw for your own lives? Discuss.