


**A Five-Day Devotional Journey**
**March 30 – April 5, 2008**
**Acts 7:9-19**

# Joseph

## Vision for an Amazing Deliverance

### 1 Sold as a slave but God was with him

**Read.** Acts 7:9-10 NLT

These patriarchs were jealous of their brother Joseph, and they sold him to be a slave in Egypt. But God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles.

**Read.** Genesis 39:1-5 Message

After Joseph had been taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelites, Potiphar an Egyptian, one of Pharaoh's officials and the manager of his household, bought him from them. As it turned out, God was with Joseph and things went very well with him. He ended up living in the home of his Egyptian master. His master recognized that God was with him, saw that God was working for good in everything he did. He became very fond of Joseph and made him his personal aide. He put him in charge of all his personal affairs, turning everything over to him. From that moment on, God blessed the home of the Egyptian—all because of Joseph. The blessing of God spread over everything he owned, at home and in the fields, and all Potiphar had to concern himself with was eating three meals a day.

**Think.**

- If you have the time, read Genesis 37 and 39 for the full story. What kind of a young man is Joseph? What do you find most striking about him?
- What was the root of his brothers' jealousy? Do you think he had any idea how they felt?
- Where in your life are you dealing with a strained relationship right now? How can you make sure you handle this situation better than Joseph's brothers handled theirs?
- It seems like things go from bad to worse for Joseph — but God continues to show up in the midst of it all. Where in your life right now could you use some Joseph-style perseverance and faith?

**Pray.**

Father, give me the integrity I see in Joseph as I navigate some of the stickier situations in my life this week. Give me eyes to really see the hearts of others, and to see your hand at work in the most difficult of situations.

**Live.**

Take steps towards reconciling a strained relationship—before you find yourself in a pit.

Each one of these people of faith died not yet having in hand what was promised, but still believing. How did they do it? They saw it way off in the distance, waved their greeting, and accepted the fact that they were transients in this world. People who live this way make it plain that they are looking for their true home. If they were homesick for the old country, they could have gone back any time they wanted. But they were after a far better country than that—heaven country. You can see why God is so proud of them, and has a City waiting for them.

Hebrews 11:13-16, Message

**The baby gurgled softly in his arms as he cradled him and quietly wept. “Manasseh” he would call him — “Forgotten.” Forgotten were the years growing up in a home with a doting father and scheming brothers now long gone. He had gone from favored son to bartered slave to household servant to prison ward. Now they called him Zaphenath-paneah — “Savior of the world.”**

**Heady stuff for a young man in his thirties.**

**But amidst displaced pain and the forgotten images of his own father's face, he couldn't forget the dreams — and the divine hand that had directed everything. More was afoot, of that he was sure, as he gazed over his son out to the city spread before him...where eleven pairs of shuffling feet made their way to the lord of the land.**

**The next stop in Stephen's speech before his Jewish accusers is the Joseph story — a story that, like the others Stephen tells, has Jesus written all over it. It's just that here it stands out in living color. Into the Joseph story are woven all the key elements of the Jesus story: a loved son; jealous brothers; plots and betrayal and “murder” — followed by a totally unexpected “resurrection” that not only surprises his brothers but saves them in an amazing act of deliverance that reaches beyond them to the entire world.**

**The Joseph legacy becomes the Jesus challenge to each of us: the challenge not to be stunted by all that would imprison us but rather to embrace the nasty turns of life through which God does and will do some of his most awesome work in saving a starving world.**

## 2) Isn't this the man we need?

**Read.** Acts 7:10 NLT

And God gave him favor before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. God also gave Joseph unusual wisdom, so that Pharaoh appointed him governor over all of Egypt and put him in charge of the palace.

**Read.** Genesis 41:33-38 Message

"So, Pharaoh needs to look for a wise and experienced man and put him in charge of the country. Then Pharaoh needs to appoint managers throughout the country of Egypt to organize it during the years of plenty. Their job will be to collect all the food produced in the good years ahead and stockpile the grain under Pharaoh's authority, storing it in the towns for food. This grain will be held back to be used later during the seven years of famine that are coming on Egypt. This way the country won't be devastated by the famine." This seemed like a good idea to Pharaoh and his officials. Then Pharaoh said to his officials, "Isn't this the man we need? Are we going to find anyone else who has God's spirit in him like this?"

**Think.**

- Read all of Genesis 40 and 41 if time permits (it's eighty verses). How is it Joseph always seems to land on his feet? How does Stephen account for this?
- Which of Joseph's qualities do you most see in yourself? Which would you like to see more of in yourself?
- What do you see as God's role in all of these unfolding events? How are you seeing his hand at work in your life lately?

**Pray.**

Abba, give me fresh vision to see not only your presence, but the path you would have me pursue. Grant me patience to wait on you.

**Live.**

Ask the Lord to give you a new dream for your life.

## 4) An amazing act of deliverance

**Read.** Acts 7:13-14 NLT

The second time they went, Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers, and they were introduced to Pharaoh. Then Joseph sent for his father, Jacob, and all his relatives to come to Egypt, seventy-five persons in all.

**Read.** Genesis 45:4-8 Message

"Come closer to me," Joseph said to his brothers. They came closer. "I am Joseph your brother whom you sold into Egypt. But don't feel badly, don't blame yourselves for selling me. God was behind it. God sent me here ahead of you to save lives. There has been a famine in the land now for two years; the famine will continue for five more years—neither plowing nor harvesting. God sent me on ahead to pave the way and make sure there was a remnant in the land, to save your lives in an amazing act of deliverance. So you see, it wasn't you who sent me here but God. He set me in place as a father to Pharaoh, put me in charge of his personal affairs, and made me ruler of all Egypt."

**Think.**

- Once again, if time permits, read Genesis 42-45 for the full story.
- Why does Joseph test his brothers as he does? Do you see a desire for revenge? caution? or what? How would you have felt if you had been Joseph? What would you have done? How would you have felt as one of the brothers?
- From his vantage point, how does Joseph explain the unfolding events of his life?

**Pray.**

Lord, lead me to a fresh vista on my life that I may see a clearer picture of what you have been doing through me — and what you would yet do through me.

**Live.** Let someone "off the hook" today — bless them unexpectedly.

## 3) Go to Joseph...do what he tells you

**Read.** Acts 7:11-12 NLT

But a famine came upon Egypt and Canaan. There was great misery, and our ancestors ran out of food. Jacob heard that there was still grain in Egypt, so he sent his sons—our ancestors—to buy some.

**Read.** Genesis 41:53-57 Message

Then Egypt's seven good years came to an end and the seven years of famine arrived, just as Joseph had said. All countries experienced famine; Egypt was the only country that had bread. When the famine spread throughout Egypt, the people called out in distress to Pharaoh, calling for bread. He told the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph. Do what he tells you."

As the famine got worse all over the country, Joseph opened the store-houses and sold emergency supplies to the Egyptians. The famine was very bad. Soon the whole world was coming to buy supplies from Joseph. The famine was bad all over.

**Think.**

- How was Joseph able to counter the effects of the famine and keep people alive?
- Where are you experiencing famine in your life right now — physically? Emotionally? Financially? Socially? Spiritually? Which traits of Joseph can help you to weather these famine-like conditions?
- What steps can you take to help you prepare to face hard times in the future? How ready are you now?

**Pray.**

Lord, help me not to live either in denial of what is happening in the world or to be panic-stricken by it. In the midst of the pressures of a broken world, give me the cool shoulders of Joseph.

**Live.**

Take needed steps to prepare for potentially hard times ahead.

## 5) While dying he prophesied the exodus

**Read.** Acts 7:15-19 NLT

So Jacob went to Egypt. He died there, as did our ancestors. Their bodies were taken to Shechem and buried in the tomb Abraham had bought for a certain price from Hamor's sons in Shechem. As the time drew near when God would fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt greatly increased. But then a new king came to the throne of Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph. This king exploited our people and oppressed them, forcing parents to abandon their newborn babies so they would die.

**Read.** Hebrews 11:22 Message

By an act of faith, Joseph, while dying, prophesied the exodus of Israel, and made arrangements for his own burial.

**Think.**

- If time permits, read Genesis 49-50 for a full sampling of all the looking ahead that both Jacob and Joseph do before their deaths. What personal experience have you had with the prophetic?
- How far ahead do you generally look as you live your life — next week? Next month? Next year? Further? Or do you find today by itself is all you can really handle?
- What primary lesson have you learned from watching Joseph this week? How will you apply this lesson in a practical way?

**Pray.**

Father, grant me eyes of faith to see beyond the immediate to the bigger flow of your plan in my life and in this world. Through means large or small, use me as a vessel of your deliverance in the here and now.

**Live.**

If you don't have one, sketch out a 7-year plan for your life.