

Q2 L12 - Joseph, Prince of Egypt - 2022-06-18

Luccas Rodor: Hi, friends, welcome to our Sabbath School Study Hour here at the Granite Bay Hilltop Seventh Day Adventist Church. Thank you so much for spending this time with us, for investing your time to learn more about God's Word. Thank you so much to the local audience. It's so good to see you. The church looks so beautiful here this morning, and I'm sure that we're going to have a very beautiful study of God's Word.

Today we're going to be studying lesson number 12, our second-last lesson of this quarter in this study about Genesis, and the title of today's lesson is "Joseph, the Prince of Egypt." And so today we're continuing the study from last week. It's going to be interesting. We have so many details, so many nuances to this very beautiful and well-known story, but sometimes some details slip through the cracks, so I'm excited about the study today.

Before that, though, I would like to invite everyone that is watching, if you would like to take advantage of our free offer, today's free offer is called "Riches of Grace," and this talks all about God's grace, His beautiful grace. If you would like to receive this free offer, then you could call 866-788-3966, and you could ask for the offer number 152. If you're in the United States or in the Continental North America, you could text SH056 to the number 40544, and you could receive also a link to a digital download. If you're outside of the United States or continental North America, then you could go to the website study.aftv.org/SH056, and you could also acquire a digital download for this free offer, as well.

So, today's lesson is a continuation of last week's, right? Well, that's how lessons work. But the theme, the subject is the same. It's a continuation of the story of Joseph, and so it's a very beautiful story. This is one of the most well-known, one of the most beautiful stories in our world, right, in the history of literature. We have so much coming from the Bible, but this story-- you have a few that you know, are just world-famous. You have the story of Joseph, maybe the story of David, Moses--these, I believe are, you know, some of the most prominent figures of the Old Testament. And the story of Joseph, it has so many lessons. There's just so many different ways that we could go.

And so we started last week, we talked a little bit about Joseph's context. We talked about his upbringing. We spoke about the favoritism of Jacob towards Joseph, the hatred of the brothers, how they attacked Joseph, how they sold him. We talked a little bit about the story of Tamar and Judah, the nuances of that story. But today's lesson, lesson 12, it brings forth with some very unexpected turns, because Joseph's story begins taking on some very unexpected turns here in the following parts of the lesson. At this point, 13 years have gone by, 13 years have gone by.

We're kind of jumping in time here; 13 years after the beginning of his tragedies, 13 years after the beginning of his trials, the beginning of, you know, being ripped from his family, 13 years had gone by. And he becomes, as we know, the second most powerful man not only in Egypt, but in the world. Egypt was the world power at that time. And so becoming the Prime Minister of that country, what it truly meant is that he became the second most powerful man in the world. And he was shown, you know, as we know, again, a vision as a teenager that his brothers would bow before him. That had not happened, yet. And I'm sure that, you know, Joseph, at this point, it was beyond a shadow of a doubt that God was leading somewhere. But maybe there was an inkling of a question, "Well, what happens next? I remember those dreams. When do these things happen?"

It's very likely that these dreams comforted him in his-- you know, and let him know that God was in charge. Because if it were me, and I had just become the second most powerful man in the world, the first thing that I would do would want to, you know, figure out if my father was still alive. I'd want to know if my family was still there, if something had happened to them. That's what I would do. But we know that Joseph, he waited in the Lord. He was patient about it. You know, here we find that Joseph goes from rags to riches, from slave to the most powerful man or the second most powerful man. And his family back at home, they had no idea, right, that, again, the second most powerful man in their

world was Joseph, the brother that they had betrayed in the case of the brothers, and the son that he had lost in the case of the father.

You know, Joseph was sold to Egypt, basically as a child, as a very young boy. But his trials and his sufferings, they had made him a man. And, friends, this is one of the central teachings of the Bible. Trials aren't good in and of themselves, but in what they can develop in us and what they can generate in us. We don't give thanks for all things, right? The Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, you know, the Bible doesn't say give thanks for all things. What does the Bible say? "Give thanks in all things," and that's a lesson that Joseph had to learn here. In the university of the hard knocks, the university of the desert, that's where we learn the most valuable lessons of life.

In Joseph's case, the anvil of life had hammered him in preparation for the fulfillment of his great destiny, of his great vocation that God had provided. This moment that we're going to study, the reunion of Joseph with his brothers, it draws very dramatic lines in the biblical narrative. The story is deeply emotional. Chapter 42 onward of Genesis describes unpredictable details. The 11 brothers humiliate themselves. They come to Egypt, they humiliate themselves before Joseph, especially when he forces them to bring back their youngest brother, Benjamin.

Who could foresee these requests? Who could have foretold that that was what Joseph was going to do? Who could have foretold these counterpoints in the story? And in this point, I imagine that when, you know, these brothers, they come to Egypt--and we're going to get into the details of this--but I can imagine, you know, already, kind of foreshadowing that moment here in the lesson. I can imagine that these young men, their past just flashes before their mind when they're now confronted with the idea that they're going to have to place their youngest brother in a vulnerable position, in a vulnerable place. The despair in Joseph's eyes, their father's pain, here they're faced again with their transgression. They're not the same men anymore. We know this, but Joseph didn't know that yet.

As indicated in the lesson, a central theme of these chapters throughout the study of this week's lesson is the sequence of the events on which we would normally suppose that the emphasis would be on who? On Joseph, right? We would suppose that the emphasis--because thus far, the story has been mostly about Joseph. But now the story line kind of shifts, and it's actually about the repentance of the brothers. Now, not only the repentance, but the change, the huge drastic change in these men. You see, friends, the one who slumbers not, He was not indifferent in this story. He was only awaiting in the shadows of human detours for the right moment to jump into the scene of action and execute His infallible plans.

Sunday's lesson introduces the beginning of Joseph's rise to power, right, his rise to fame. Who could ever imagine such a comeback story? Who could? Sold to Egypt, betrayed by his brothers, a slave in Egypt. Your life expectancy wouldn't be very long in that. Who could've expected this? Here we see that Pharaoh's dreams reveal what would soon take place in the land. This is in chapter 41, verse 28.

Now, curiously, when Joseph is brought before Pharaoh, and when Pharaoh reveals his dreams to Joseph, he doesn't offer any sort of religious patronization. You don't see really Joseph patronizing Pharaoh, which is what we would expect. I mean, wouldn't you be tempted to do that? I mean, if you had just spent the last 3 years in jail, and now you're brought in front of the man that could set you free, and he needs something from you, wouldn't you be tempted to, you know, kind of patronize him? But that's not--that's precisely what Joseph does not do. He doesn't do anything to make it more likely for Pharaoh to believe in him or in his God.

Joseph's proposal has to do with action. He suggests a very practical plan that emphasizes the economic aspect and impact of Egypt, or the life of Egypt, and the interests of the king. Apparently, Joseph was more preoccupied with these details. You see, Joseph, he followed a very sound and fundamental concept of effective evangelism, which is scratch the itch. Scratch the itch. Everything else would follow at the right moment. To Ellen White, commenting on this, in the "Review and Herald," it's from April 24, 1888, she said, "Jesus came in personal contact with men. He did not stand aloof and apart from those

who needed his help. He enters the homes of men, comforted the mourner, healed the sick, aroused the careless, and went about doing good."

You see, according to her, the only effective strategy is this: that God meets people where they're at, not where they're supposed to be, or where they should be, or, you know, where we would expect them to be. And so here Joseph, instead of rambling on about religion, he comes up with a very practical plan to demonstrate to Pharaoh that this God that Joseph serves, He is not only a God--he's very different from the god of Egypt, that were very demanding in tribute and all these things. No, God wants to help. The Lord wants to be of help. This principle is very much incorporated throughout the Bible, especially by Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 22, where he says, "I have become all things to all men, that I might--I might by all means save some."

You see, Pharaoh needed to choose someone to deal with the situation at hand. He needed to choose someone that could deliver his land from the emergency that they were about to go through. And Genesis 41:37 informs us that "So that advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all of his servants." Joseph's advice was seen as good, valued. You see, choosing Joseph was pragmatic. It made sense, at least to Pharaoh in that emergency. It might not have made sense to anyone else; because, again, a slave and then directly a prime minister, and a slave with a fairly shady past, such as Joseph.

You know, Pharaoh might've asked Potiphar, that was his captain of the guard. At that moment, Potiphar might have revealed to Pharaoh what had truly happened. We don't know the details. We could only speculate and imagine. But the point is, is that to Pharaoh it made sense, because Joseph was the only one that came up with a sound plan, with a pragmatic, practical plan, someone that represented a viable solution for the problem that the nation would face. And, curiously, Pharaoh recognized that the Spirit of God was in that man. Genesis 41:38, "Can we find such a one as this? A man in whom is the Spirit of God."

So, not only does Pharaoh notice and recognize the sharp wit of Joseph, where he already devised a plan in just a few moments, but he notices that there's something different about this man. There's something special about him. Friends, isn't that what we want everyone to see in us as well? Don't we, more than anything else, more than intelligence, more than wisdom, more than anything else, don't we want people to see and to notice that the Spirit of God lives within us? So, this is a prime example of that, because you have a pagan monarch noticing and realizing that in this slave in front of him dwelt the Spirit of a god. In his notion, his idea, "a god." Little did he know that this was the Spirit of the God, the God of heaven.

From what we know about Joseph's character with the story so far, it's not really conceivable that with the advice that he gave, he was thinking about himself, about his own grandeur, and his own seeking attention, which is very common in the business mentality of today. I mean, right? People seek attention for themselves, so that they can grow, and they can climb the ladder of success. This is God's plan, not Joseph's, who probably had no idea what God had in mind anyway. He's just acting and reacting according to God's will. And indeed, Pharaoh chose Joseph for the job. Pharaoh chose Joseph for the job. He--now if you're a monarch, if you're a king, and at least good at it in some way, right, I would expect Pharaoh to be a good judge of character. Here in this case he was, at least. He certainly was a specialist in judging Joseph's character. He was certainly impressed with this young Hebrew man and recognized that Joseph was a very wise counselor. Genesis 41:39 says, "Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Inasmuch as God has shown you all of this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you.'"

The following years were years of abundance. They were described as years when the grains was like the sand of the sea, the sand of the ocean. And this reveals a supernatural intervention, a divine blessing that could not be wasted. Joseph reflected in his life the abundance of God's presence, the abundance of God's gifts. Behind the phenomenon of years of abundance and the years of famine, Joseph's life demonstrated that God was in charge, that God was all powerful. Additionally, here we see that a further indication of these truths is that Joseph had two sons. What were their names? Manasseh and Ephraim.

And the names of these two boys, they represent exactly this: him forgetting all of the horrible trials that he had been through and the solutions of God in his life. Here we have the final demonstration in this story of how God can transform something bad into something good. To me, this is the watermark point of this story is God transforming tragedies into blessings.

And this is where it becomes real for us, because in our life, in many moments, we only think that things can only get worse. Have you ever been through that? It's like things can only get worse. It's going from bad to worse to worse. I mean, Joseph was prominent in his family. He was great. He was taken care of. He was favored. And then he just, in one moment, loses everything. He becomes a slave in the land of Egypt. And then when things are finally maybe going good again, even as a slave, things happen again. Counterpoints happen, and he's sent to jail. Now, not only is he a slave, but he is a slave in prison in Egypt.

So, here we see that the reality of the story is that, friends, there is no limitation to God. God can transform anything into anything. He has that power. God is ambidextrous. God can deal with problems with both hands, with all solutions available. We have a very limited perspective. God has absolute perspective. I've heard once--I think it was Moody that said, you know, don't tell God about your problems; tell problems about your God. That's what we have to learn to do. And this is what we find here in this story.

Monday's lesson, Joseph confronts his brothers. Now, in the development of the story, the famine forces Jacob to send his sons to Egypt to buy wheat. The old man found himself-- or saw himself as a victim to circumstances beyond his control. He had no idea what he was placing into motion by sending his sons to Egypt, the series of events that would happen with the culmination of his reunion with his son that he thought was dead. He had already suffered indescribably.

Ellen White indicates that Judah couldn't take anymore the sufferings of his father, and so he moved away, so great was the suffering and the pain that Jacob went through. Judah had to move away. At the reunion of Joseph with his brothers, what had been foretold to him years before was now fulfilled. And now I imagine that something kind of snaps inside of Joseph's mind, something kind of clicks, and he understands that, again, this is divine providence that is at work. Joseph's position of power, the second most powerful man in the world, is shown in stark contrast to his very vulnerable brothers, confused, probably very dazed coming from the fields and the rural areas of Canaan, now in the metropolis of the world, buildings, pyramids, sphinxes.

I don't know about the history, the city, all that, right, so don't quote me on that. But, you know, here you have them coming from this place of just wilderness to this place of power, of human achievement, and they're probably dazed, they're confused, their eyes are open this big, their mouth is dropped, and they see this powerful man in the full attire of Roman monarchy-- not Roman, sorry-- Egyptian monarchy. I'm thinking ahead already. Egyptian monarchy. They could never imagine such a reversal of events, that the high and mighty prince before them that had power even to kill them, if he wanted to, is none other than the brother that they had sold years before. Genesis 42, verse 9, observes that Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them. Certainly, a deluge of thoughts and of images flooded his mind at that moment, memories of the detours of life that up to that point choked him up, the pieces of a formidable puzzle that now start to fit into place.

Friends, our sins have a very cruel way of finding us. When Joseph orders their youngest brother to be brought to him, his brothers petrified in terror and horror, begin to argue among themselves. Can you imagine that? The one thing that their father did not want is the exact thing that happens. And they stand petrified, reenacting at this point their betrayal of Joseph and their lies to their father. They had no idea that Joseph could understand everything that they were saying, that they were discussing.

And finally, in a storm of emotions, because Joseph is hearing everything that's happening--imagine witnessing that--he has to excuse himself from them, and he goes out to cry. Friends, the verbal action of the Hebrew here is very interesting, because it appears in the Piel--the Piel is the Hebrew form of

intensity. It's kind of like the exclamation mark, the exclamation point, right, of the story. What this means is that he went out crying convulsive tears. He cried a lot. A linguistic detail here underlines the story and nuance that we would mostly forget. But what it says here, it says in verse--chapter 42:21, it says, "They said to one another." You'll remember that when they began this whole story by selling Joseph, the text began with this exact phrase.

So, what the Bible is doing, what the author is doing is that he's drawing the parallel from the moment where they sell Joseph to the moment where now they are before Joseph. "And they said one to another." Back there in chapter 37, verse 19, they start discussing with one another to then sell Joseph, and now they're just discussing with one another what they're going to do in this situation. There's a line that is drawn together here in the story.

You see, their time in jail, their peregrination, if you will, in jail in chapter 42, it reflects Joseph's own peregrination, his own time in jail in chapter 40. In fact, his brothers connect what is happening to them to the evil that they had done to their brother 20 years before. The recognition of guilt was inevitable. Chapter 42:21 says, "They said to one another, 'We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore, this distress has come upon us.'" Reuben's words reflect their state of mind perfectly: "Behold, his blood is now required of us."

Now, those words bring to mind what he had said before in chapter 37, verse 22, which reinforces again the parallel between what they had done and what they were now going through. If this is not a demonstration of judgment against our actions, where the judgment that comes because of what we do, then what is? All of this, friends, is aggravated by the fact that we cannot change the past. There was nothing that they could do at this point to change what they had done, nothing.

Our actions become the implacable judge of our sins. And here I'm not speaking primarily, okay, so please understand what I'm saying. I'm not speaking primarily of God's judgment, but the general truth of which you reap what you sow. That's just a law of life. Would this be a very crucial warning about the care that we must have in light of how we treat people, of how we deal with them, of how we act and react in our relationships in life? Tuesday's lesson segues into the following part of the story: Joseph and Benjamin.

So, Joseph, he demands as a test of truth that they would bring Benjamin. He demands that they bring Benjamin. Of course, he had other reasons, right? He kind of masquerades it as a test for, you know, veracity of what they're saying, but he has other reasons. In any other circumstance, Jacob, his father, would've said no, right?

I kind of see my dad in Jacob. You all, many of you met my parents when they were here a few weeks ago. My dad would--he would die before he left Michael anywhere, my little brother. They're inseparable pairs, right? They cannot--my dad would die before that would happen. But now my parents are getting older, and we have to start getting Michael used to different realities, right? In a while, might be that he'll have to stay with either myself or with my sister. And so now my father--I saw-- it's heart wrenching for him. I see it in him. But, you know, they leave him-- Michael is here with me now, right, he's staying with us for about a month.

And so I can see here in this situation, I can relate to it. Jacob, he would rather die than let Benjamin go, but he's forced because hunger knows no argumentation. Hunger does not know anything else, other than the emergency of the moment. Hunger knows no sympathy. And so he saw himself without any other alternative and allowed Benjamin to accompany his older brothers. And Benjamin's presence, in fact, it dominates the following scenes; because when the brothers return to Egypt, Joseph's attention is entirely cast on Benjamin, on his younger brother. Joseph refers to Benjamin with a well-known expression of care and of love. He says, "My son," and then he blessed him.

The concept of blessing in the Bible is very rich, one of the richest in the entire Bible. He returns to Benjamin the grace that he had not received from his older brothers. And now fear and apprehension

grip the older brothers. "This prince of Egypt is completely unpredictable. First he was angry. He wasn't believing us. Now we bring our brother, and he blesses him, calls him, 'My son'? Completely unpredictable. What is this guy going to do next? He's a wild card, we don't know what he's going to do next."

Benjamin, the youngest, is served five times more food than any of them, and it's--what's happening here is that Joseph wants to make sure that they don't harbor any feelings of hatred or of, you know, envy towards Benjamin. But this time, the favoritism didn't seem to bring up any negative feelings, any hostility as had happened in the past. And so Joseph then introduces an additional test to make super sure that his brothers are different men.

Wednesday's lesson, the divination cup. Once again, events take on new and entirely unexpected course. To their despair, already on the way home, they're submitted to a terrible test and accused of a very serious crime. Again, I can only imagine that their hearts froze within them when they found out what they were being accused of: theft, especially after the generous way that they had been treated. Genesis 44:17, "The man in whose hand the cup was found, he shall be my slave. As for you, go up in peace."

From the youngest to the oldest, their bags of wheat are searched. And finally, after haunting moments of terror, it's found. Where? Benjamin's bag. And then in a deep demonstration of what can only be described as despair, verse 13 adds that they tore their clothes, and all of them went back down. This was their worst nightmare. Nothing could be worse. The ground seems to open up before them. Here these men stand united in terror. The intensity of their reaction is very significant, because they now fear for Benjamin that would also be lost, in addition to Joseph, and like him become a slave in Egypt. They didn't know what to do. What would you do? What could you do? Going back to their father without Benjamin, it was not an option. Witnessing his pain, witnessing his despair again, that would drive him to his grave and drive them to their grave.

Judah notices what is at stake. He proposes, even tries to propose an alternative solution. He offers to stay in his brother's place, just like as with the sacrifices where the innocent assumes the place of the guilty. Joseph, at this point, he must've noticed that these men were not the same as they were when they sold him. A powerful change had overcome them. Judah, again, the mastermind behind the whole story, the whole tragedy, he assumes the role of a substitute willing to sacrifice himself for his younger brother. He retells the entire story of his family's tragedy, from the loss of Joseph to the end, and he argues that they could never return to their father empty-handed. Chapter 44, verse 31, "It will happen when he sees the lad is not with us, he will die."

Judah is speaking as someone that's holding his heart in his hands. What would happen to his father if their younger brother did not go back with them? He had pledged his life as surety. Have you ever had to do that? Remember back when you were kids, trying to convince your parents of something? Have you ever promised something extremely valuable just for them to--I promise I'll go to bed at 7:30 at night every night for a month. I promise to wash my clothes for the whole year. How many of those promises did you actually keep?

At this point, Judah, he had pledged everything he had. There was no return without Benjamin. There was no other option. It was that or it was death. He pledges all he had on the table, all that he had to offer. Verse 33 through 34, "Now therefore please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father?"

I can imagine Judah crying, begging, bowing low in front of Joseph. Again, a powerful, impacting scene, reminding Joseph of his dream, his brothers bowing before him and now begging. You see, in the reunions here with Benjamin, both the sons of the same mother, few words were exchanged between Joseph and Benjamin, at least that were related here in the biblical narrative. But the text does tell us in chapter 43, verse 31, "His heart yearned for his brother, so Joseph made haste and sought somewhere to weep."

I'm trying to give you, you know, all the perspectives, at least the important ones. Judah, the brother, and now Joseph. We find five mentions of Joseph weeping profusely at the outcome of the story. The final act that we find here is extraordinarily beautiful. When he couldn't hold it in any longer, he made all his servants and staff in attendance leave. And finally, the stage is set for his great revelation. Chapter 45, verse 3, "'I am Joseph. Does my father still live?' But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence."

How would you react when seemingly the dead had come back from death? That's what it must've been to them. In one of the most magnificent demonstrations of forgiveness, of grace, and of faith in the whole of Scripture, we witness the greatness of one of its most prominent figures. Here chapter 45:4-7, "And Joseph said to his brothers, 'Please come near to me.' So they came near. Then he said, 'I am Joseph your brother, who sold you into Egypt, but now do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here. For God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years, the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.'"

Friends, this is where we find the most important part of this story. This is crossing point, the crux of the story, because here we see that Joseph understood the events through the perspective that can only be granted by God. There's no other way to explain Joseph's attitude. Verse 8, the following verse, "It was not you who sent me here, but God. And he has made me a father to Pharaoh and a lord of all his house."

Friends, the question that we're left with at this point, what was the foundation of his attitude? How, why did Joseph react this way? How was he able to react this way? And the answer that we're left with is that Joseph never lost sight of God's divine providence, of God's divine sovereignty, never. He knew who the true ruler was. Pharaoh might have had power over his life. Potiphar might have had power over his life. His brothers might've had power over his life. Mrs. Potiphar might have had power over his life, but he knew who the true Monarch was.

Almost 20 years had passed until the confusing loose ends of the tapestry were made clear to him. Finally, he understood that ultimately it was not the greed or the intrigue of his brothers. And while they had been personas upon the stage of action, they were only minor characters in this great plot. Same went for Potiphar, same went for the cupbearer and the cupholder--the cupbearer and the baker, same went for Pharaoh. They were only minor characters in the plot, because the main character had always been God. Three times Joseph insists that it wasn't his brothers, but that it had been divine providence that had guided the apparent detours and absurdities, the tragedies, and the mysteries of his life, the adjustments on the course to the completion of his glorious purpose in God.

Here we don't find, friends-- and please understand what I'm saying. I'm not talking here--we don't find here any sort of determinism or inexorable karma, but precisely God's providence. You see, divine providence is a terminology exclusive only to the Christian Bible. It was not you, but God; the express conviction here that beyond human causation or any sort of natural forces, it is He who holds in His hands unlimited control over all things. "You sold me, but God."

You see, friends, God always has the last and the final word, always. He, not coincidence, not chance, not human choices, good or bad, had brought Joseph to the point where he now found himself. And two things have to be understood here: first, on one side the evil that was intended by the human action or by the blind actions of natural causes; and on the other side, God's perfect and corrective will. And focusing on this last aspect that was ultimately exemplified by Jesus Christ in John 18:1, of whom Joseph was a type. He was even submitted to the same betraying action by Judas, who sold him.

It's interesting, Judas and Judah, the same name in different forms. Sold by Judas, who sold him for silver at the price of a slave. Apparently, God was indifferent when he was thrown in the pit. "Where was God?" Wouldn't you be asking that? "Where is God?" My brothers have betrayed me. Where is God to

rescue me, to redeem me? Sold as a slave, an object of lies and of slander by Mrs. Potiphar, made a prisoner, forgotten by all, but precisely what seemed to be the blows of chaotic coincidence is what brought Joseph's life closer to the realization of his purpose, projected by God. Every detail, from his adolescent dreams to the dreams of Pharaoh, the most powerful man of the world at the time; the hostility of his brothers; as well as the exact moment when that caravan of merchants passed by; from beginning to end, even the most imperceptible details are worked by the hands of omnipotence for a higher purpose, invisible and incomprehensible to human eyes.

But the most surprising thing here is that even--and again understand what I'm going to say--even the sinful acts of people involved were used and incorporated into God's plans. And let me be clear. God does not cause evil. That is not what I am saying. God does not cause evil. He maintains no partnership with the enemy. When people were evil, those are their sins. But God is able to transform even horrible events into instruments of his purpose.

The favoritism of Jacob was a sin that God did not force him to do, enforce him to commit to. The hatred of Joseph's brothers towards him was not brought on by God. We cannot ascribe Mrs. Potiphar's promiscuity to God. He was not responsible for the forgetfulness, for the ingratitude of the cupbearer. But while He was not at fault nor the causer of all these evils, in a mysterious and enigmatic way, in the counsels of His eternal providence, because we don't get it, the Almighty is never taken by surprise. His plans are not frustrated by the sins or the weaknesses of people. And all the sins committed against Joseph, the Most High works patiently in the favor of His servant. You know why? Because we heard all things work for the good of those who serve the Lord, who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

But let me tell you again, because I've already said this before, it's not things that work, friends. It's God. In all things, God works. It's not the things that work; it's God that works through all things, because whoever has God on their side is never outnumbered. When Joseph was confronted by Mrs. Potiphar, and it seemed like the world was against him, he was the majority. When Joseph's brothers ganged up on him and threw him in a pit, he was not outnumbered. When he was apparently forgotten in jail, imprisoned for 3 years, he was still the majority, because God was by his side. And whoever has God is never outnumbered.

It was the acknowledgement of the divine providence that enabled Joseph to rise above all feelings of vengeance and of hatred. Even in chapter 50, where we find the re-enactment of the feelings of insecurity of Joseph's brothers about him, after Jacob dies, and they get scared again that now that their father is dead, Joseph is going to treat them harshly, again, he reaffirms his understanding of God's providence. Chapter 50, verse 15, "God, not you. God, not you." If Joseph had become a cynic or bitter, he would have wasted his time and his energy, and he would also have wasted the perception of new possibilities that God placed in his path.

Seeing life, friends, from a rearview mirror, as we often do, makes it impossible to correctly identify the new opportunities in life. Have you ever met those Christians that seem like they've been baptized in vinegar? Always bitter. Or the bat Christians that always see life from like upside down? Don't be one of those. Don't be a bat Christian or a vinegar Christian. See life from the perspective of God.

You see, faith in God's providence, it frees us from falling into despair. It saves us from becoming victims or creating a victim complex. It creates and it nurtures in us a spirit and an attitude of gratitude, and ultimately it confirms the conviction that nothing, nothing, friends, can really be done against God's children unless by divine permission, who, in all things already works in our favor. You might not understand it, but God does. God, not you. God, not the disease. God, not the unemployment. God, not the broken relationship. God works always.

This faith is humbling. When Joseph finally reached the top, he didn't ascribe it to himself and personal merit, intelligence, capacity, his own virtues. God, Genesis 45:8, "God has made me a father to Pharaoh."

Friends, Joseph withstood extreme absurdities of life, trials, doubt, how? Because that's the question. How can we read the story and try to grasp what is being said to us, how? He kept his faith on the God that had revealed His purpose to him. He knew that somehow God would fulfill His promise; because, once again, the theme of this entire lesson, this whole quarter, "God Always Fulfills His Promises," always, God fulfills His promises.

Friends, God has also given us a dream, not of authority or of dominion over family or even of a nation, but of reigning with Him in the kingdom to come. That is His plan for each individual person, and that is why nothing can truly separate us from His love, nothing. Nothing can impede the fulfillment of this purpose except our own incredulity, our own inconsistencies, and our own bad choices. In the book, "Ministry of Healing," page 474, paragraph 1, it says, "In the future life, the mysteries that here have annoyed and disappointed us will be made plain. We shall see that our seemingly unanswered prayers and disappointed hopes have been among our greatest blessings."

If there's one thing that I want to leave with you here this morning is the understanding, the realization that "God, not you," because God always fulfills His promises, and God always has the last word. As we contemplate the story of Joseph, always remember that. Keep your eyes on God. Things might be chaotic, they might be throwing you in a pit, into prison, being betrayed. God, not you, not the circumstances.

Learn to observe life through divine eyes. Learn to foresee the riches of God's grace, because they are abundant. May God bless you in this endeavor. May God bless you in your study of the Bible. May God bless you being here at our church and studying the lesson with us every week.

I would like to invite you, at the conclusion of this powerful lesson, I'd like to invite you to take advantage of this free offer, "The Riches of Grace," nothing more appropriate. If you would like to take advantage of this for free, you could call the number 866-788-3966. You could ask for the offer number 152. If you're in Continental North America, then you could text SH056 to the number 40544, or if you're outside of the Continental North America, you can go to study.aftv.org/SH056, and you could get a digital download of this free offer, as well.

I'd like to invite you all to bow your heads, and let us say a word of prayer. Dear Lord, thank You so much for Your beauty, for Your grandeur. Thank You so much for the riches of Your grace. And thank You so much for the abundance of Your providence. Lord, we are tiny beings. We are so small. Most of the times, we have no idea what's going on around us, and we, Lord, we like to be in charge. We like to be in control. That's just how humans are. And so, Lord, as I'm sure David had to learn, help us learn, Lord, to always submit ourselves to Your providence, to Your sovereignty.

Bless each person that is watching from home right now. Be in their home. Dwell in their hearts. Dwell on their families, Lord. Also, for those that are here today live, Lord, I ask You to, again, dwell in them. Imbue them with Your Spirit, with Your love, with Your grace. Reveal to them the reality of Your providence. Perhaps You won't show all of us, You won't reveal to all of us just exactly what comes next, but we know that You are already there in what comes next, caring for us and working in our favor.

So, I ask You, Lord, just give us patience, give us faith, and give us the acknowledgement of Your divine, the riches of Your grace. I ask You these things, Father, in the name of Jesus, amen and amen.

Announcer: Don't forget to request today's life-changing free resource. Not only can you receive this free gift in the mail, you can download a digital copy straight to your computer or mobile device. To get your digital copy of today's free gift, simply text the key word on your screen to 40544 or visit the web address shown on your screen, and be sure to select the digital download option on the request page. It's now easier than ever for you to study God's Word with Amazing Facts wherever and whenever you want; and most important, to share it with others.

Ashley: I grew up in Northern New Jersey, just about 35 minutes out of New York City, and I grew up in a famous family. And so my father played for the New York Giants for nine years. That's how we ended up

where we were. He also played for the San Francisco 49ers, and he was in the Pro Bowl. He won two Super Bowls. And I also had an older brother who played professional baseball, so I had a lot to live up to. Everything we did was based around sports. That was my life, and I loved it, but inside I was--I struggled daily with insecurity, lacking confidence. You know, I would look at myself in the mirror and not-- and would not see good things about myself.

I started to put all my energy into soccer, and I decided that I was going to go far with that. So I ended up getting a scholarship to play in the University of Miami. I was being pulled in these, like, two directions of, you know, wanting to live this party lifestyle with my teammates, and I was so engulfed in soccer and school, but I also had this, like, strong yearning, desire to serve God, and I was just struggling to figure out the balance and how to do that. I was in Sin City, in Miami, and I couldn't-- I felt like I was swimming upstream, and I just felt like I couldn't breathe. I had everything everyone would've wanted. I had everything. I had a scholarship to pay for school. I was playing a sport. I was the captain of my team. I was in Miami. I was--I had a great family.

I had a lot of friends, but where was God? It was--all of that is meaningless unless I had Him. And the lifeline that He gave me was this soft whisper in my ear, saying, "Go." I just remember, "Go." So I decided to go, and I spent two months in Kenya and two months in Uganda, and God was saving me by sending me there. It was God's prescription for my life, for my existence. When I returned from Africa, I went back to school. I finished school, finished soccer. I went to the University of Tennessee to get my master's when I met my husband. Our motto in life was we wanted to live in reckless abandon for our Creator and whatever that was, whatever that looked like. And you know, we've traveled, and we've done mission work, but we've mostly been in Tennessee, and when we--we spent the summer apart.

A year after that, we were married, and it was the summer of 2015 when we came back together. He's like, "I have some things I want to share with you. I want you to listen to this." And we were on a 14-hour car ride, and he just started playing this "Prophecy Code" all the way back from 2005, and it was so clear, and I just was comprehending it so well. You know, after a couple, like, three or four, I was like, "I need a break. My mind is going to, like, explode from all this, like, information overload," and everything that I thought I had known about the Bible and about Scripture is just completely different. I was in shock. Everything that I was hearing, it was like Scripture is proving Scripture is proving Scripture.

My heart was, like, changing in that car ride because it's like learning more about God than I ever had before. After that car ride and after listening to the whole "Prophecy Code," my life was completely changed. He's become more real to us than He ever had been before, and that has pushed us to disciple and to minister to others and share with them what we know. My name is Ashley, and I want to thank you for changing my life.

Announcer: "Amazing Facts," changed lives.

Daryl: I grew up in a neighborhood in northwest DC, a neighborhood called Petworth. I went to a private school, and I didn't fit in well at school because I was from an inner-city neighborhood. I didn't fit in well at home because I went to a private school. I've always been a people pleaser, so I would do what they did. And if they started drinking, I started drinking. They started smoking marijuana, I smoked marijuana.

Once I became aware of girls and what male-female relationships were all about, I was off to the races with these guys. So, we started partying every weekend, and we'd stay out until all hours of the evening. My homework didn't get done. My grades suffered because of it. As soon as I went to college at a Catholic university here, I started smoking hashish, and back in those days you could smoke in class. I loved the way it made me feel. I didn't have to worry about how I fit in. It was fun. People liked to hang with me. I was kind of the life of the party. I came out of my shell.

And shortly thereafter, in my mid-20s, I was working at one of the biggest computer companies. After graduating college, I was at one of the biggest computer companies on the planet at the time. And I had money, I had women, I had, you know, a car every two years. My job performance started to suffer. Nothing else was the same in my life. I started missing work. I would get hired, maybe even be

promoted. I did really well. Three or four months in, five months in, say, four to six months, I would lose a job. I've forgotten more jobs than I can remember. I needed to smoke on a daily basis all day, every day, and that cost money.

So, then, I started getting into stealing. I'm stealing from family and friends. And when that ran out and people were not trusting me anymore, I started to rob people. My family didn't want anything to do with me. My friends didn't want anything to do with me. When I called people, they didn't answer the phone. When I knocked on the door, they didn't answer the door. I purchased a house, and a young lady and I purchased it together, and we were going to move in together, and that fell by the wayside because I started smoking, and I started taking things from the house and selling them. I started taking her personal items and selling them. I started stealing from her purse. I started stealing from stores. Pizza delivery guys were like an ATM.

Nothing mattered. I've been homeless about four or five times in my life, and each time was drug related. Each time, I chose to do drugs rather than to live with this person, whoever it was I was dating. During all this time, my sister and her family, they would engage me, they were taking me to church. I met this woman who happened to be going to my church, and I didn't even know it, and she was taking Bible studies from her brother-in-law and her sister, who were church leaders. They heard about a seminar by Doug Batchelor and Amazing Facts called "The Prophecy Code." I learned about the true meaning of the Sabbath. I learned about my health issues and how diet and exercise can positively affect my health and my well-being. I learned about forgiveness from God.

For me, I took to Pastor Doug right away because of the way he spoke, his cadence, the way he talked was so-- it was just like he was talking to me. He gave out his book, "The Richest Caveman." And when I read that book, I was astonished, all the things he had been through. His story was not exactly like mine, but it was a lot like mine. I just identified with it right from the start.

I thank God that I went to the Prophecy Code seminar. It was my introduction to the truth, and I even go to YouTube and catch some of the other seminars that they've had, you know, over the years. And I do it because I still feel a connection. It's like my roots. It's like my foundation was built on Amazing Facts. And I like the free offers they give. I can imagine the call-taker on the other end when I call the 800 number. "Hi, Daryl, how are you? Which free gift would you like today?" I can't imagine life without getting those free offers because those books are so well-written, just like they're written for me. I really do appreciate Amazing Facts and Pastor Doug Batchelor because they brought-- they helped bring me to where I am today. My name is Daryl. You and Amazing Facts have changed my life.

Dee: My parents got divorced when I was three or four, and then I was basically unchurched most of my life. I had a girlfriend in high school tell me that she had to break up with me because I wasn't a Christian. I thought, "That's weird. I believe in God. Why would she say that?" Not realizing I was living a horrible life with foul language, was mean, and other stuff. And that kind of challenged me initially.

And then my dad, 9/11 woke him up that he wasn't ready to meet his Lord, though he was a man that I valued and knew he loved me. Didn't doubt that. But he just knew he needed more, so he started watching TV ministries first, Baptist preachers and others, and he was kind of intrigued by what he was learning. And so when he turned me on to this, this television station, first thing that I got access to was Doug Batchelor's "Most Amazing Prophecy" series that he did in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

And I remember when I first watched this, my background was Baptist-ish of sorts, but I remember when I first watched this series, I remember thinking, "I've never heard that before about the state of the dead or about the Sabbath or the commandments or the Rapture," or other things. And I remember thinking to myself, "I've never heard that before, but that's what the text says." And that kept happening. And I had this experience of just wondering, like, "Well, what else have I believed that isn't as it is," you know? And the more I watched, the more helpful it became, but again, he kind of took a different perspective on the messages. It was fresh to me, but I just-- these things I'd never heard before--and I just realized, like, there's so much stuff in the Bible that no one's talking about and that people need to know.

And so I ended up in this awkward situation that some of my friends who didn't believe what I was coming to believe. I didn't know how to communicate with them, and so one of the things that helped me initially was the SabbathTruth.com website, the TruthAboutHell.com and the TruthAboutDeath and some of those resource websites that Amazing Facts had put together that were just full of resources.

If I needed an answer to something that someone brought up, there would be a 95% chance that Amazing Facts would have something that I could use. It makes witnessing even easier in that sense. The Amazing Facts Prophecy Study Bible was my first real Bible that I had of a more trusted translation. The Bible Study Guides were in the back of it. They had a lot of other resources that were helpful. If you can hand a book to somebody and you can pick up a phone and call Amazing Facts, you have everything you need.

And so I was just printing off stuff and handing it to people, you know? Like, "Here's what I'm coming to realize. This is true. It's in the Bible." And it was a huge blessing to me and a real help just to kind of help me to better understand what the message was and understand it for myself and have resources to put in the hands of other people. It was invaluable.

Some time went by. I eventually went to a school of evangelism and was baptized. And then I had this amazing opportunity that after being in ministry for about five or six years, Doug Batchelor was going to be the main speaker at a youth event, and I was actually going to be doing a seminar at this youth event. And it was just this amazing kind of full-circle experience that the first person I came in contact with in Adventism, to hear the message, to have it make sense, to be able to do ministry together with him in whatever role possible, just meant the world to me, and to be able to tell him my story and tell him thank you was invaluable. And so God just gave me a precious gift in affording that opportunity, and I'll never forget that. My name is Dee. Thank you for changing my life.