

Study Hints for Thinking Further
International Bible Lessons
Genesis 41:37-45, 50-52
Sunday, January 8, 2012
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Some Bible study groups or classes can further discussion by asking some or all of the **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** below. Others may want to send the bulletin size *International Bible Lesson* home with their students for further study in the coming week to encourage continuing Bible study. The *Study Hints for Thinking Further* below are not actually intended to be answers to the discussion questions, but hints a teacher may use to help students think through and discuss the questions in class.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What qualities in Joseph made Pharaoh recognize that the Spirit of God was within him?

Joseph was the only person in Egypt who could interpret Pharaoh's dreams, and he told Pharaoh clearly that he could not interpret his dreams but God could give him a favorable answer (Genesis 41:16). Joseph displayed the humility of a truly godly person, probably unlike most of those Pharaoh encountered in his royal court. Joseph came to Pharaoh with high recommendations for his abilities, and those who recommended him proved to be right. Joseph also told Pharaoh the solution to his problems that his dreams foretold would certainly take

place, and he gave Pharaoh sound advice on how to solve these problems. It became obvious to Pharaoh that the Spirit of God was within him and God was the One Who gave Joseph his wisdom. It is certainly easier to point out problems than provide an excellent solution to them. Joseph did both things.

2. What qualities would a person have today for someone to recognize that the Spirit of God was within them?

An important quality would be humility and giving God the credit (or glory) for what someone knew God had given them. Acknowledging God before others as the One Who granted success. A person who tried to live according to the high moral standards that a person associates with being a follower of God and what the Bible teaches. A person who gives good, commonsense advice in the solving of problems, rather than just being a person who points out problems or complains about situations and others.

3. What difference does it make for leaders and people when the leaders are people who are discerning and wise because the Spirit of God is within them?

Though many may not recognize the Spirit of God in someone, the person with the Spirit of God within them will be honest, trustworthy, and responsible. They will be fair and just in all of their dealings with others. They will not take selfish advantage of their leadership position. They will be merciful and just on the right occasion. They

will pray and seek God's will and God's solutions to the problems they and others face. They will have divine help and power when needed to accomplish God's purposes. By their example and carefully chosen words, they will influence others to seek God and strive to serve God with all their love in heart and mind. The number of godly leaders can increase when godly leaders have the opportunity to truly lead in accordance with God's moral character, standards, and purposes, and when they seek to surround themselves with others of like character and mind.

4. Why was it important for Pharaoh to give Joseph as much authority as he did?

When Joseph made a decision, it would not have been good for a less wise person (perhaps even with unworthy political or selfish motives) to overrule him or contend with him. It would not have been good for him to need to get the approval of a committee for every decision, which might have wasted years and left the country unprepared for the coming famine. It would have been bad if every time Joseph made a decision someone appealed to Pharaoh to reverse it, which Pharaoh had already said he would not do because Joseph was unquestionably second-in-command. God set up a benevolent dictatorship through a godly man, Joseph, because this is what the people, the leaders, and the nation needed at that time. A democracy or a republic may not be the best form of government if the people are not an educated and moral people who respect the commandments and the revealed will of the true God in order to obey Him.

5. Why do you think Joseph's wife may have looked up to him as a person who could teach her the truth about the true God?

As the daughter of a priest of the idol "On," she would have been very familiar with the religion and the practice of worshiping the various idols of Egypt. When she learned about and saw all the wisdom of Joseph and how the true God helped him, she would have been drawn to him as one who would teach her the truth about God. Though Pharaoh appointed her to marry Joseph, it seems reasonable to believe that after all God had done to provide the very best for Joseph that God would have moved Pharaoh to choose the very best woman for Joseph to marry and teach the ways of the true God. He would have taught her how the true God had helped him (and eventually how God had led Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). She would learn how the true God helped Joseph in every hardship and brought him success, and this too would move her to look up to her husband as one who could teach her about the true God. She would want to know more about the God who helps, because she already knew how truly powerless the Egyptian idols were. She would want to teach her children about the true God under the guidance of Joseph who would help her.

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