

Study Hints for Thinking Further

International Bible Lessons

Genesis 45:3-15

Sunday, January 15, 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. Joseph expressed concern that his brothers might become distressed and angry with themselves. What does this expression of concern tell us about Joseph's character?

Joseph consistently showed more concern for God and others than for himself. He did the right things and left the consequences with God. He did not want to do wickedness against God and sin against Potiphar (see the earlier lesson on January 1, 2012). Joseph was not selfish. He thought of the feelings of others. He did not want his brothers to suffer from being angry with themselves, perhaps because he did not take personally the evil they did to him – knowing it was God's way to get him and eventually them to Egypt to preserve life. Joseph's high moral standards not only prevented him from doing wrong, but also showed him the right and guided him to do what was right and to take positive steps to help others and make their lives better – even those least likely to merit any concern from him.

2. What reason or reasons does Joseph give his brothers for not being angry and upset with themselves for doing wrong to him? Can you think of a time when someone wronged you and later you could see how God intended it for good or brought good out of the wrong that was done to you? How did this knowledge make you feel? Did it make you change your mind in any way?

God had sent him ahead to preserve life and to keep alive many survivors of his own family in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. [[The class may need time to think of an answer from their own life. The question is more difficult than an easier question you may want to ask instead: "When did something bad happen to you that God made into something good for you and others?" You may want to be the first to answer the questions as an example to others while they are thinking of their own experiences. Be certain to encourage the class to look for ways God works everything out for good that happens to them, especially in this new year before them if troubles come. Encourage them to place their confidence in God, just as Joseph did.]]

3. If Joseph kept believing in his dreams of greatness, what types of things did he do to help make his dreams come true?

He kept relying on God and doing the best he could to everyone in every situation (even discouraging situations), and he left the results with God.

4. Who are two of the people that Joseph expressed the greatest concern for in the Bible Lesson on Genesis 45:3-15? Why do you think these two would be of special concern for him?

His father Jacob and his brother Benjamin. His father had not heard about him or from him for many years. Joseph did not know that his father thought he was dead, and Joseph did not know if his father was alive. They both loved one another greatly. Up to this time, Joseph had ruled over Egypt for at least 9 years (7 years of plenty and 2 years of famine). Joseph did not know how his brothers had treated Benjamin in the years he had been away, and Benjamin was Joseph's only full brother (Rachel was the mother of them both). [[Perhaps the class can think of other and additional reasons.]]

5. In what way or ways does Joseph demonstrate the manner in which Jesus Christ would like for His followers to treat others?

Joseph was forgiving toward his brothers. He treated others as he would want to be treated. He did not seek to punish his brothers. He did not hold resentment toward them, but saw God at work in all of their lives. He wanted his brothers to know about the true God and how God works. He wanted them to be happy in knowing the work of God in preserving lives.

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