

JOSEPH: A MAN OF INTEGRITY AND FORGIVENESS

A Classic Series

The Ultimate Family Reunion

Genesis 45:16–46:30



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Few things are more poignant than the reconciliation and reunion of a family long separated by distance or circumstance. The story of Joseph provides a moving example not just of reconciliation but of long-awaited reunion. Studying the reunion of Joseph and Jacob reminds us of that joyful day when we will be united with our heavenly Father. As we wait for the reunion of the family of God, how do we prepare? This lesson explores how we should live today in light of eternity.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Plans for the Reunion (Genesis 45:16–28)

Joseph told his brothers that he would give them the best land in Egypt, but he hadn't consulted with Pharaoh. When Pharaoh heard about Joseph's family, he threw open the doors to the country.

Joseph rounded up wagons, opened up the storehouses, and ordered supplies. For Jacob, Joseph loaded down ten male donkeys with the finest Egyptian clothes, goods, and delicacies and ten female donkeys with enough food to feed him like an Egyptian prince (Genesis 45:23). It must have been an unbelievable sight—a caravan of such overwhelming abundance, passing through a famine-scarred land strewn with the carcasses of dead animals.

Dressed to the hilt in their designer tunics and weighed down with donkeys and treasures from Egypt, the brothers walked up to Jacob, who had been watching this caravan approaching. The brothers exclaimed: "Joseph is still alive, and indeed he is ruler over all the land of Egypt" (45:26). No confession of their sin. No long explanation. Just simple and direct.

How did Jacob take the news? The Hebrew words in Genesis 45:26 are translated literally as "his heart grew numb."¹ Most likely, Jacob had a mild heart attack. Seeing their father's reaction, the brothers sat him down and explained what Joseph had said to them. Hearing these words and seeing the wagons and donkeys loaded with goods, Jacob's spirit was revived (45:27). And he responded as any loving father would: "I will go and see him before I die" (45:28).



Quotable

The ultimate family reunion will be when all God's people join together in the presence of Christ.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. Journey from Canaan to Egypt (Genesis 46:1–7, 27)

No doubt the brothers told Jacob about Joseph's desire to relocate the family to Egypt. But pulling up tent stakes and moving to a foreign land filled with foreign gods and customs is a life-altering decision. Relocating to Egypt was not simply a personal move for Jacob and his family. It was a national move, affecting the entire nation of Israel.

Making his way south to Beersheba, Jacob sought the Lord, offering sacrifices (Genesis 46:1). Though impetuous by nature, Jacob had finally learned to seek the Lord before rushing ahead. His little nation was about to enter a fast-paced, polytheistic society that could swallow them whole. He needed to know, should he make such a move?

After seeking God and hearing from Him, the next morning Jacob woke with confidence. The Lord had told him not to be afraid, because He would make him into a great nation (46:2–3). With the blessing of God, Jacob and his entire family loaded the wagons and headed south. From a small seed—seventy of Jacob's male descendants and their families—the Lord would grow a nation (Israel) within a nation (Egypt).

3. Reunion with Joseph (Genesis 46:28–30)

When the tiny nation of Israel crossed the border, they must have looked ragged. And they weren't even sure where to go! So Jacob sent Judah ahead to ask Joseph for directions. Finding their way, they began to unpack and set up camp in the fertile valley of Goshen (Genesis 46:28).

Joseph had waited for this day for twenty years. He washed his chariot and struck out for Goshen. He probably broke every speed limit, pushing his horses faster and faster. Then, jumping off his chariot, Joseph ran to his father and embraced him with tears of utter delight.

Linger here for a moment. Imagine the scene. No words were spoken. What could be said? Father and son were reunited, embracing each other with tears of joy. Hugging tight. Neither wanted to let the other go.

Pulling away for just a moment, cupping Joseph's face in his hands, Jacob, through a cloud of tears, declared his life complete. "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, that you are still alive" (46:30).



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A CLOSER LOOK

Trusting God's Promise

Jacob spent twenty years outside the land of promise while working for Laban. And once Jacob made it back in the land, he planned on dying there. But God had different plans. Jacob and his family would sojourn in Egypt, and the patriarch would die in that foreign land. But Jacob (Israel) received this promise from God: He would remember His covenant (Genesis 46:2–4). Joseph would take care of Jacob, and he would prosper. When father and son reunited after twenty-two years, both wept for a long time (46:29). Jacob's life is a roadmap of what it's like to walk with God—hopes and disappointments, obedience and disobedience, faith and fears. God is never finished maturing us on our journey of faith, taking us down roads that twist and turn. But we can trust that “He who began a good work in [us] will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).



LET'S LIVE IT

Family reunions are wonderful events, especially when distance has been caused by disappointment or sin. The Bible speaks of other joy-filled reunions, like the *national reunion* found in Ezra 8 or the *personal reunion* of another father who lost a son in Luke 15:11–32.

All of these are wonderful and moving stories, but the greatest reunion is yet to come. It is the one all children of God long for—being reunited with our heavenly Father. And best of all, the *ultimate family reunion* is an *eternal reunion*.

Are you facing any life-altering decisions right now? What is your usual process for making major decisions? How does knowing of the certainty of God's presence with you now and of your future reunion with the Lord affect your decision-making in situations like these?

ENDNOTE

1. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006), 806.



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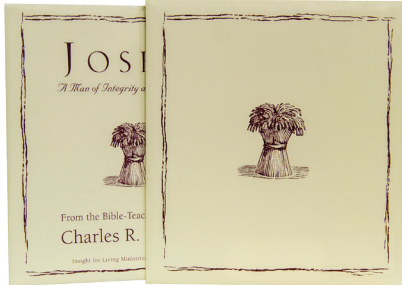
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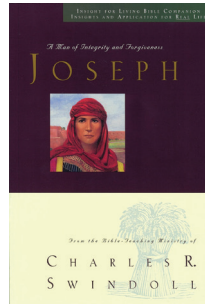
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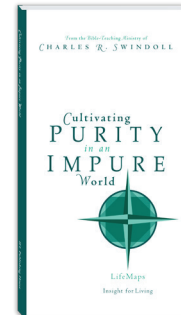
Tools for Digging Deeper



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