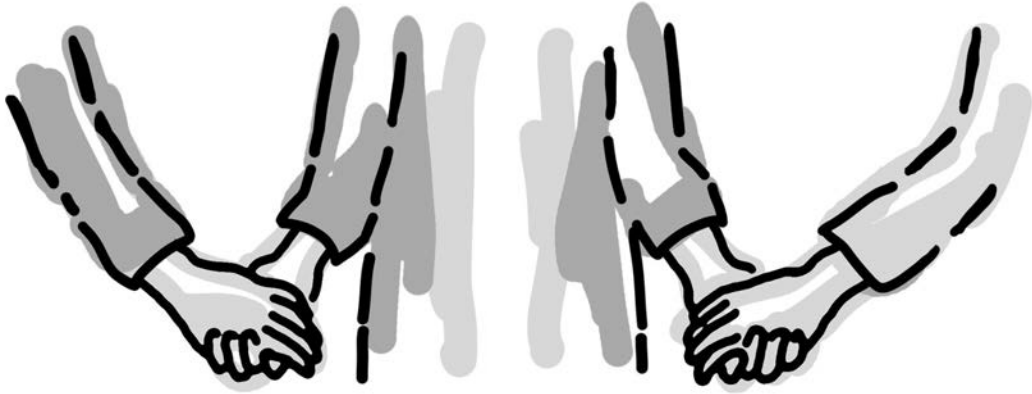


Rest and the Family



SABBATH—JULY 31

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 34; Deuteronomy 4:29; Isaiah 43:1; Genesis 39:1–6; Genesis 39:21–Genesis 40:22.

MEMORY VERSE: “Dear friends, you already know about this. So be careful. Don’t let these evil people lead you away by the wrong they do. Be careful that you do not fall from your strong faith. But grow in the grace [loving-favor] and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Glory be to him, now and forever! Amen” (2 Peter 3:17, 18, ERV).



The brothers sell Joseph to some slave traders who travel by.

THE YOUNG MAN, Joseph, carefully looks for his older brothers. Joseph has searched for them for many days. He is happy to find his brothers. The young man runs to them. He waves and shouts their names. The brothers look at the young man. Hate fills their eyes. The only reason we know what happens in this story is because of Reuben. Reuben tells his brothers not to kill Joseph. The brothers should only beat up Joseph a few times. Then they should throw him in a well. Later, Judah comes up with a plan for the brothers to get rid of their little brother for good. They can make some money while they get rid of him, too! So, the brothers sell Joseph to some slave traders who travel by.

This family is messed up, for sure! We get to choose many things in life. But we cannot choose our family. Our family connections are often painful. These bad connections can make us feel hurt and tired. Then we need rest. How can we find peace in our families so we can rest? This week we look at the story of Joseph and his family. We shall see how God finally heals this family and brings them rest.

TROUBLE AT HOME (Genesis 34)

Read the story about Dinah in Genesis 34. Joseph is a young boy when this story happens. How do you think this story makes the family of Joseph feel? How do you think this story makes young Joseph feel?

Leah and Rachel are sisters. They are married to the same man, Jacob. They fight against each other for Jacob. Later, we can see this same spirit of fighting in the ten older sons of Jacob. When they are young men, the brothers kill all the men in the town of Shechem. Then the oldest son, Reuben, sleeps with Bilhah, who is the maid of Rachel and one of the wives of Jacob (Genesis 35:22). Bilhah is the mother of two of the sons of Jacob. Then Judah, another one of the sons of Jacob, sleeps with his daughter-in-law Tamar. Tamar tricks Judah. Judah believes she is a woman who sells sex for pay. They have twin boys (Genesis 38).

Jacob makes the problems in his family worse. He shows favor to Joseph by giving him an expensive coat (Genesis 37:3). This gift makes all the brothers jealous. Then they hate Joseph. For sure, this family has a lot of problems!

Read part of the list of heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:17–22. Do you see that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are in this list of Bible heroes? Think about all their family problems. These men made a lot of mistakes, right? So, why do you think Paul includes these men in his list of faith heroes in Hebrews 11?



Leah and Rachel are sisters. They fight against each other for Jacob.

The people that God chooses to serve Him often make awful mistakes in life. Paul does not include Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Hebrews 11 because they are perfect. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob often learned the hard way about faith, love, and trust in God. They made many mistakes along the way. So, the list in Hebrews 11 should give us hope. The list shows that God does not fail His children. He never stops trying to save them.

What problems do you have in your own family? For sure, we cannot change the past. But how can giving yourself fully to the Lord and His ways right now help make things better for your family in the future?

CHOOSING A NEW DIRECTION (Deuteronomy 4:29)

“When Joseph was a child, Jacob taught Joseph to love and obey God.”

“Joseph has been sold into slavery. Now he is on his way to Egypt. The men who buy Joseph travel south. They pass near the land of Canaan. Joseph can see the hills where the tents of his father are. Jacob will be lonely without Joseph and will suffer much. Joseph cries when he thinks about his loving father. Joseph thinks about what his brothers did to him at Dothan. Joseph sees his angry brothers. He remembers the unkind looks his brothers gave him. Joseph asked them to not sell him into slavery. But his brothers answer him with insults. The heart of Joseph is filled with fear as he thinks about the future. His life has changed so much! Before, he was a beloved son. Now he is a helpless slave that no one cares about. Joseph is alone. He has no friends. What is going to happen to him in the strange land where he goes? For a time, Joseph lets the fear and sad feelings in his heart control him. . . .

“Then Joseph thinks about the God of his father. When Joseph was a child, Jacob taught Joseph to love and obey God. Often Joseph sat in the tent of his father. He heard his father tell the story about the dream that Jacob saw when he ran away from home. . . . Now Joseph remembers all these precious lessons. Joseph believes that the God of his fathers will be his God. Joseph gives himself fully to the Lord. He prays that the God of Israel will be with him in Egypt.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 213, 214, adapted.

As we see from this quote, Joseph starts to find rest during his journey to Egypt as a slave. Joseph starts to make peace with the past. He can do this because he makes a personal decision to follow God. This decision gives Joseph strength. So, that is why he can find rest.

Read Deuteronomy 4:29; Joshua 24:15; 1 Chronicles 16:11; Psalm 14:2; Proverbs 8:10; and Isaiah 55:6. What do these verses teach us about giving ourselves to God? Why do we each need to make a personal choice to follow Him?

Do you want rest and peace? Then you must make a personal decision to follow God just as Joseph did. Maybe your parents or grandparents had a lot of faith. But faith is not something we get from our parents in the same way we get their blue eyes or black hair. Remember, God has only children—and no grandchildren.

FINDING REAL SELF-WORTH (Isaiah 43:1)

When Joseph arrives in Egypt, he is sold again. Genesis 39:1 tells us that the traders who bought Joseph sell him “to the captain of Pharaoh’s guard, Potiphar” (Genesis 39:1, ERV). Joseph is now in a strange, new land.

The close family friendships we have growing up are important. Our families help us to know that our lives are important and worth something. Joseph grew up believing he was special. He was the oldest son of the best-loved wife of his father, Jacob (Genesis 29:18). Joseph is the favorite child of his father, too. He is the only child that Jacob gave a special coat to (Genesis 37:3, 4).

But who is Joseph now? He is a slave. His owners can sell him whenever they want. Look at how fast his whole life changes. Life is now hard for Joseph, for sure.

Joseph learns the lesson we all must learn. We will have a tough time in life if we depend on other people to tell us how much we are worth. We will be confused, because not everyone will care about us or who we are. So, we need to know that our worth comes from what God thinks about us.

How does God see each one of us? For the answer, read Isaiah 43:1; Malachi 3:17; John 1:12; John 15:15; Romans 8:14; and 1 John 3:1, 2.

God looks at each of us with love and mercy. God sees in us beauty, talent, and skills that we cannot even begin to see! God died for us so that we can have the chance to become everything He meant for us to be. When we look at the Cross, we see this Bible truth. Yes, the Cross shows us that we are sinners. The Cross also shows us the big price God paid to save us. At the same time, the Cross also shows us our worth and value to God. God loves us and wants to save us, even if no one else believes we are worth saving. God wants to save us from the power of sin now and from the everlasting death that sin brings.

So, now that we know all these things, the question you must ask yourself is: What answer will you give God for the love that He shows you in Jesus Christ?

Many people tell us today not to judge ourselves and just to love ourselves. But why is this advice wrong? Why must our love for ourselves and for other people come from the God who made us?



Our families help us to know that our lives are important and worth something.

HONORING GOD ALWAYS (Genesis 39:1–6)

At first, the story about Joseph in Egypt starts out well. Joseph gives his life to God. God blesses Joseph in his work as the manager of the house of Potiphar.

How does God bless Joseph in the house of Potiphar? What about the connections that Joseph has with the people he works with? Are they good or bad? Explain. For the answers, read Genesis 39:1–6.

Potiphar likes Joseph. Other workers also like Joseph. But trouble soon comes his way. Someone at home has no rest.

What problem does Joseph soon have at home? How does he choose to manage this problem? For the answer, read Genesis 39:7–10.

Joseph has a problem with the wife of Potiphar. Maybe we should say this again in a way that is more correct: the wife of Potiphar has a problem. A big one. She looks at people as “things” she can use. She wants to “use” Joseph for sex. The Bible tells us that “Joseph was a very handsome, good-looking man” (Genesis 39:6, ERV). The Bible often does not talk about how good people look. Why? Because “‘people judge by what is on the outside, but the LORD looks at the heart’ ” (1 Samuel 16:7, ERV).

What does Joseph do? How does he answer the evil behavior and wishes of this woman? Joseph obeys the Bible. He follows the important rules of the Word of God in all his connections with people on the job. Bible rules are not old-fashioned. Anyone who has suffered from the choice to sin can tell us that.

The Bible story about Joseph shows us that the wife of Potiphar does not try to get Joseph to sin only one time. No, she flirts with Joseph many times. Joseph tries to explain to her why he cannot do what she wants him to do (Genesis 39:8, 9). This woman becomes angry with Joseph.

Joseph understands that he cannot control the behavior of other people. He decides to live, love, and trust the people around him in a way that honors God. Joseph has learned to live as if God is with him every second. This knowledge helps Joseph say no to sin.



The wife of Potiphar wants to “use” Joseph.

THE WAR BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH (Genesis 39:21–Genesis 40:22)

Genesis 39:11–20 tells us that Joseph suffers because he will not have sex with the wife of Potiphar. Joseph is thrown into prison. Because Joseph is the slave of Potiphar, Potiphar can kill Joseph at any time. We can see that Potiphar does not believe his wife. So, why does Potiphar throw Joseph in jail? Because Potiphar must take action. He must protect his good name and his honor, even if his wife is lying. Even after all this happens, the Bible tells us, “the LORD was with Joseph” (Genesis 39:21, KJV).

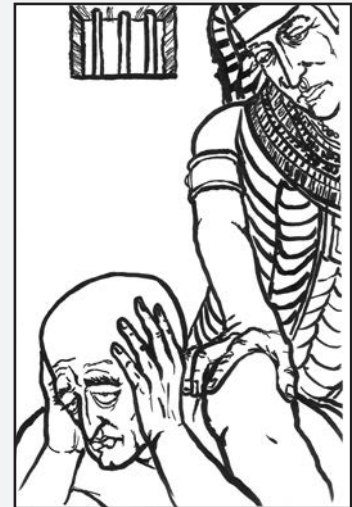
Life on planet Earth is not fair. People do not always get rewarded for their good behavior. Evil is not always punished right away. But there is some good news for Joseph: he can find rest, even in prison. God is with him. Sure, Joseph can think about how bad his life is and how it is not very fair. He can even give up on God. But does he?

What does Joseph do when he is in prison? How does he behave around other people? What type of person does he show them he is? For the answers, read Genesis 39:21–Genesis 40:22.

In prison, Joseph helps other people. Joseph also asks for help when he needs it. He asks the cupbearer of the king of Egypt for help. A cupbearer tastes the wine of the king before he drinks it to make sure it is safe to drink. While the cupbearer is in prison, he has a dream. Joseph tells the cupbearer the meaning of his dream. Then he asks the cupbearer to help him when he is free.

What does Paul tell us is the reason for the troubles and suffering in all our friendships and close connections with people? For the answer, read Ephesians 6:1–13.

Our friendships show the worldwide war between God and Satan. This war has been happening since humans sinned. This means that there are no perfect friendships or families. Satan does his best to use all our close friendships and family connections to hurt us and to stop the plan of God for our lives. We can thank God that He does not let us fight against Satan on our own. The Bible shows us how to have good and healthy friendships. God promises to give us wisdom (James 1:5) and to be with us when things get difficult.



In prison, Joseph helps other people.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Ellen G. White writes about Joseph and the wife of Potiphar: “Joseph is an example to everyone who shall live on the earth. . . . God will be our Helper when we are in need. The Spirit of God is the same as a shield that protects us. There may be things all around us that cause us to want to sin. But we have a God who can give us strength to say no to sin. The attack of Satan on the heart and mind of Joseph was awful. . . . But Joseph said no to sin right away. He stayed firm and strong in his decision not to sin. . . . Joseph trusted his life and his honor to God. Sure, Joseph suffered for a time. But this suffering was meant to help Joseph get ready for more important work later on. God kept the name and the honor of Joseph safe. Later, God showed everyone that Joseph was innocent. God made the prison a part of His plan to save Joseph. This story shows us that, in time, God will reward our being loyal to Him. Joseph had a shield that covered his heart. This shield was obedience to God. Obedience made Joseph loyal to his master and to God. Joseph refused to hurt his master by sinning with his wife. Joseph hated that sin because it showed no thankfulness to his master. Potiphar may never learn what really happened or know that Joseph was deeply loyal to him. Even so, Joseph refused to hurt his master and get away with sinning against him in secret.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 1, page 132, adapted.



“Joseph had a shield that covered his heart. This shield was obedience to God.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Sister Anne has just joined the church. Her husband is not a Christian. Anne loves her husband. But he does not love the changes he sees in her. What advice can you give her from the Bible to give her hope and healing in her marriage?
- ② All families have problems, some more than others. All families are made of sinners. So, each of us brings our problems into our families. How can each one of us follow the Bible rules of love, forgiveness, and helping each other carry our heavy loads and problems? How can doing these things help bring healing to our families and friendships?
- ③ Many people have this experience: things are going well for them and their families. Then all of a sudden, disaster happens. When this happens, why must we trust more than ever in Bible promises? Why must we be ready for bad times, even when times are good?

ASKING GOD FOR 100 DOLLARS

18-year-old Roman Cardwell prayed from his heart before leaving home. Roman was a college student who lived in Salem. Salem is a city in the state of Oregon in the United States.

“God, if You give me \$100, I will buy stuff for the homeless,” Roman prayed. Roman was a full-time student. So, he did not have much money. Roman did not tell anyone about his prayer.

Later that day, he drove to the supermarket. He pushed an empty shopping cart through the store. He put some bread in the cart. After that, he selected something else.

Then Roman looked down into the cart. His eyes got big. A \$100 bill lay in the cart! He blinked in surprise and picked up the money. The name “Benny” was written across it.

“Benny” is famous in Salem. For years, somebody named “Benny” has gone into local stores. Benny is very sneaky. He puts \$100 bills into shopping carts and purses. Or he hides the money behind canned food on shelves. No one knows for sure who Benny really is. But Benny always writes his name on the money. People in Salem guess that Benny has given away \$50,000.00!

Roman was so excited. As soon as he got outside, he called his dad, Pastor Dale Cardwell. Roman told him about his secret prayer and the surprise answer he got.

“What do the homeless need most, Dad?” Roman asked. “I want to go shopping for them now.”

Dale Cardwell, the father of Roman, was very happy to hear the news. Dale is the pastor of Inside Out Ministries. Inside Out Ministries is a Seventh-day Adventist church in Salem. This church has more homeless members than members who have homes.

Dale told Andrew, who wrote this story: “We see miracles every day. We share Jesus with gangs, the homeless, and people whose lives are deeply broken.”

Roman is happy God answered his prayer to help other people. James 4:2, 3, WE, says, “You want something but you cannot get it. Then you kill. You want something very much and cannot get it. So you quarrel and fight. You do not get it because you do not ask God for it. You ask for it, but you do not get it, because you ask in a wrong way. You want to use it for yourselves and not for others [people].”

Part of the 13th Sabbath Offering for this quarter will help people who have escaped from other countries and come to America to be safe. Now it is your turn to be a “Benny.” Give a kind offering to help these people who are starting new lives.

INSIDE Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Roman looked down into the cart. A \$100 bill lay in the cart!

