

JOSEPH: A MAN OF INTEGRITY AND FORGIVENESS

A Classic Series

“I Am Joseph!”

Genesis 44:1–45:15



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Joseph was one of the greatest men of the Bible. Yet he never did anything we normally associate with biblical greatness. He never performed a miracle. He never slew a giant. He never saw a burning bush. He never defeated pagan prophets. In fact, he never wrote one word of Scripture. He was just a plain, ordinary man who grew up in a dysfunctional family. So, what made Joseph so great? Why does the Lord devote so much space in Genesis to tell his story? It's simple really. Joseph's *attitude* set him apart. Joseph displayed greatness not because of some miraculous actions, but because he demonstrated a daily positive attitude toward God and others. And his example stands as a challenge for us today.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. The Trap: Silver in the Sack (Genesis 44:1–17)

In contrast to Joseph, his brothers were selfish and callous. Wanting to see if they had developed a positive mind-set toward God and others, Joseph devised a test using an expensive silver cup.

As soon as the feast ended, Joseph took his butler aside and told him to place the brothers' money in their sacks and fill them with grain. Joseph then instructed him to place one other item in Benjamin's sack — Joseph's silver cup (Genesis 44:1–2).

Joseph told his butler to follow the men and accuse them of theft. In a desperate panic, they denied the charge. What reason could they have to steal from the prime minister (44:6–8)?

When the butler found the cup in Benjamin's sack (44:9–12), the brothers gasped. Ripping their clothes in grief, they did something extraordinary — they returned to Egypt to face punishment with Benjamin. They didn't abandon their little brother this time (44:13).

Upon returning to Joseph's house, the brothers threw themselves at his feet (44:14). Then Judah, looking up into the stern face of the prime minister, pled guilty. Finally, a confession came from a broken and contrite heart. But this



Quotable

*Greatness comes
in the attitudes
of humility,
forgiveness,
eternal perspective,
and love
for others.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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was not an admission of guilt regarding the cup. This confession was twenty years in the making. And with it, Judah and the brothers passed Joseph’s first test: sensitivity to God’s work in their lives.

2. The Bargain: Brother for the Brother (Genesis 44:18–34)

After Judah’s great confession, why didn’t Joseph reveal himself? Why continue the ruse and threaten to enslave Benjamin? Joseph was devising another test for his brothers. By placing Benjamin in a similar situation to the one Joseph was in twenty years earlier, Joseph targeted their hearts. The brothers passed the vertical, godly test, but would they pass the horizontal, human one? Were they sensitive to the needs of others? Would they stand with Benjamin regardless of the cost? And what of Jacob—would they tell him another lie about a lost son?

3. The Disclosure: Identity of the Governor (Genesis 45:1–4)

These were clearly not the same brothers who sold Joseph into slavery. Like the Grinch in Dr. Seuss’s classic tale *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* their hearts had grown three sizes. They were mature enough to see God’s sovereign hand in their lives and selfless enough to sacrifice their own lives for their little brother. It was too much for Joseph—he could wear the mask no longer. They now modeled the characteristics Joseph himself had learned.

4. The Response: Grace to the Guilty (Genesis 45:5–15)

The greatness of Joseph came into full bloom as he revealed a sensitivity toward God and deep compassion toward his brothers. A lesser man would have punished the brothers for what they had done. But not Joseph. He knew his brothers felt overwhelmed with anxiety and guilt. Joseph responded with compassion and support: “Do not be grieved or angry” (Genesis 45:5).

How could Joseph demonstrate such kindness? He had maintained a godward perspective in the trials of his life. Three times Joseph told his brothers that God was the one who had sent him to Egypt, to save lives from the sickle of famine (45:5–8).



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With excitement and impatience, Joseph commanded his brothers to hurry back to Canaan to tell Jacob what God had done and to ask Jacob to pack up the family and move (Genesis 45:9).

The grace of compassion and generosity is made complete with the grace of total forgiveness. Falling upon Benjamin’s neck, Joseph wept. And then going to each brother, he kissed them. At long last, Joseph was reconciled with his brothers (45:14–15).



A CLOSER LOOK

A Self-Assessment

In addition to having a vertical perspective, Joseph ranked high in compassion toward others, generosity, and forgiveness. How would you rank yourself in these areas?

| | | | | |
|------------------|---|---|---|--------------------|
| Unfeeling 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Compassionate 5 |
| Stingy 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Generous 5 |
| Unforgiving 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Forgiving 5 |

With which attitude do you tend to struggle the most?

What attitudes do the following verses command us to demonstrate?

Ephesians 4:32

Colossians 3:12–13



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LET'S LIVE IT

When we have a wrong attitude, we look at life *humanly*. But when we have a right *attitude*, we look at life *divinely*. Here are three tests of a godly attitude.

First, *when we're able to see God's plan in our location, we're getting the right attitude.*

Second, *when we're able to sense God's hand in our situation, we're getting the right attitude.*

Third, *when we're able to accept both as good, even when there's been evil in the process, we're getting the right attitude.*

Where do you live and work right now? What is your attitude toward your location? Can you see God's plan in your location? If not, pray that God would open your eyes to see His sovereignty in placing you where you are.



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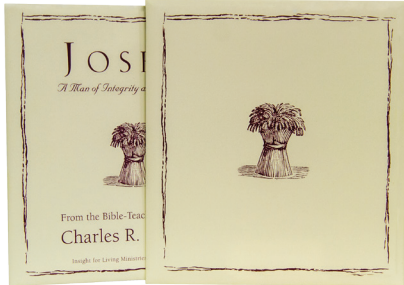
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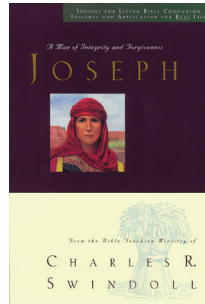
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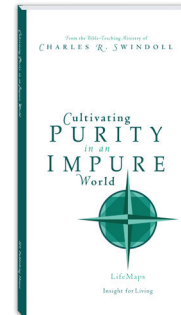
Tools for Digging Deeper



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