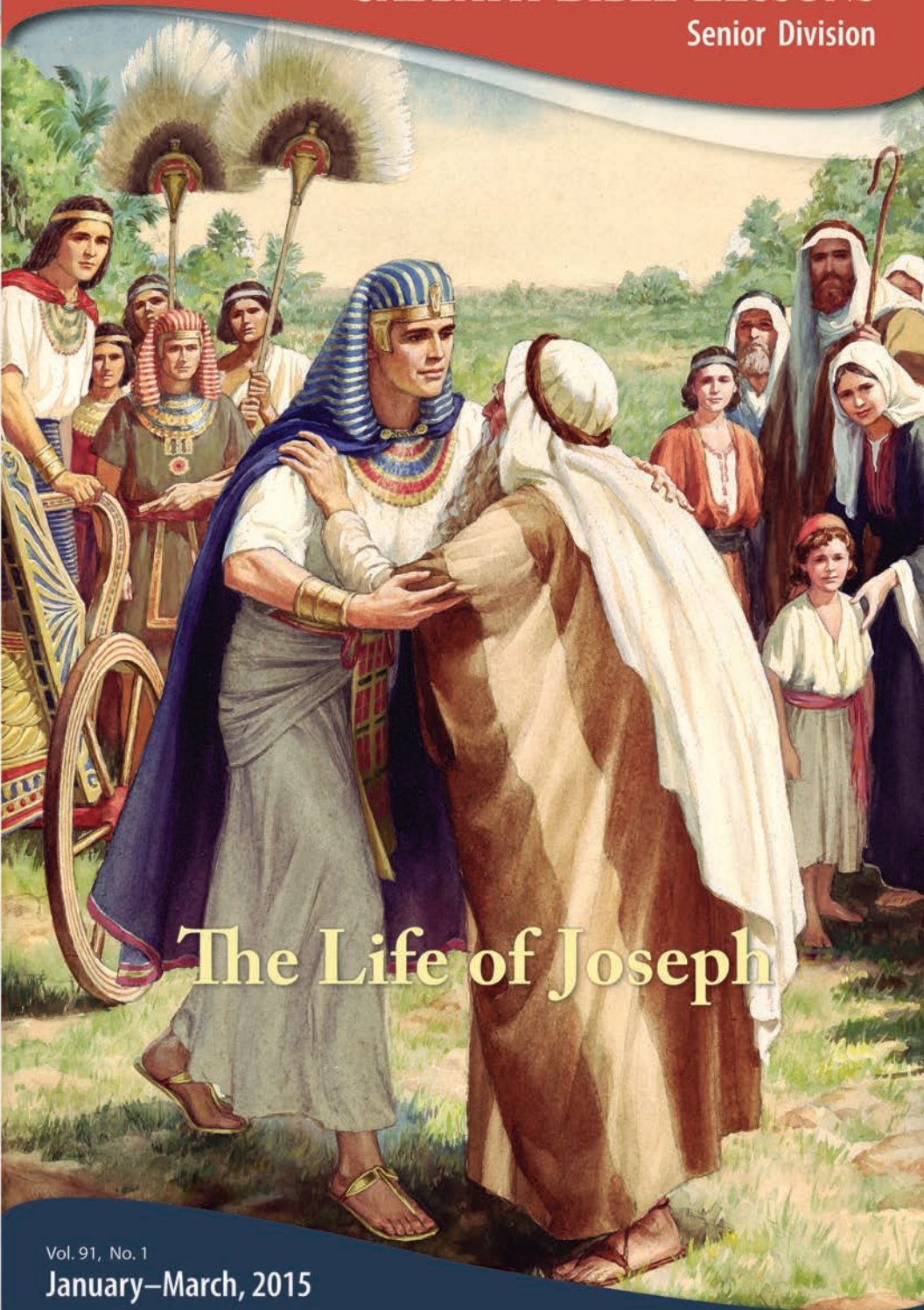


SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS
Senior Division



The Life of Joseph

Vol. 91, No. 1

January–March, 2015

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Sabbath Bible Lessons, a daily study program, is based solely on the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy without additional comments. The quotations are as brief as possible to provide concise, direct thoughts. Brackets [] are supplied in some cases to ensure clarity, proper context, and smooth readability. Further study in the source materials is strongly recommended.

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Foreword

We live in an age of unprecedented wickedness. The Bible aptly compares our day to the days of Noah. Human beings eat and drink, marry and are given in marriage without regard to a future judgment. Yet the judgments of God are falling around us, warning us of an impending crisis.

Surrounded by a similar degree of wickedness and worldliness, Joseph lived a pure and holy life. Most of his life was spent in Egypt, the greatest nation of his time. He lived through varying circumstances, yet he was faithful wherever he was called. His life of faithfulness amidst difficult, trying surroundings is an example for us.

“Especially was Joseph subject to the temptations that attend great changes of fortune. In his father’s home a tenderly cherished child; in the house of Potiphar a slave, then a confidant and companion; a man of affairs, educated by study, observation, contact with men; in Pharaoh’s dungeon a prisoner of state, condemned unjustly, without hope of vindication or prospect of release; called at a great crisis to the leadership of the nation—what enabled him to preserve his integrity? . . .

“A shepherd boy, tending his father’s flocks, Joseph’s pure and simple life had favored the development of both physical and mental power. By communion with God through nature and the study of the great truths handed down as a sacred trust from father to son, he had gained strength of mind and firmness of principle. . . . Loyalty to God, faith in the Unseen, was Joseph’s anchor.”—*Education*, pp. 51–54.

Joseph proved faithful wherever he was called, whether in adversity or in prosperity. God permitted great trials to come upon him, and though the way was rough and long, Joseph was faithful to the end. Through studying his life, we can see how we too can be overcomers. Joseph was a type of Christ, especially in the way he bore adversity.

Joseph was rewarded for his faithfulness. He was elected the prime minister of Egypt. After his death, he was also given two portions among the twelve tribes (Ezekiel 47:13). The twelve tribes are specifically mentioned by John as he describes the 144,000. This group of the redeemed is represented by the twelve tribes of Israel, and Joseph and one of his sons are both included. (Revelation 7:4–8.)

“The history of Joseph . . . is an illustration of what [God] will do for those who yield themselves to Him and with the whole heart seek to accomplish His purpose. . . .

“But such a character is not the result of accident; it is not due to special favors or endowments of Providence. A noble character is the result of self-discipline, of the subjection of the lower to the higher nature—the surrender of self for the service of love to God and man.”—*Ibid.*, p. 57.

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering for a church in Nigeria

Nigeria is a vast country, situated in the west central part of Africa. It borders Niger to the north, Benin to the west, Chad and Cameroon to the east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. With around 174 million inhabitants, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, and the seventh most populous nation in the world. It was recently recognized as having the largest economy in the African continent. The official language is English, though there are a large number of native languages spoken in the country.



The main religions are Islam (50.4%) and Christianity (48.2%). Among Christians: 24.8% are Catholic and 74.1% are Protestant.

The message of Reformation came to Nigeria decades ago, but the conflict between Islam and Christianity has hampered the growth of our work. By God's grace our brothers and sisters, moved by missionary zeal and love for Christ, are spreading the message to thirsty souls.

There are two missions in Nigeria—the Nigerian Central Mission and the Nigerian East Mission. The believers in the Central Mission have made great missionary efforts and new interests have joined them as a result. However, their place of worship now needs to move from a private home to something more representative of our church.

A brother from the U.S.A. generously donated almost 5 acres of land. However, the resources are still scarce for the construction of a house of worship. Therefore, we call upon the help of our brothers and sisters around the world to give generously of their means to help us with this construction project.

“The Lord has marked every phase of missionary zeal that has been shown by His people in behalf of foreign fields. He designs that in every home, in every church, and at all the centers of the work, a spirit of liberality shall be shown in sending help to foreign fields, where the workers are struggling against great odds to give the light to those who sit in darkness.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 465.

We pray the Lord will bless all who directly or indirectly respond to this appeal for our brethren and sisters in Nigeria.

The Regional Secretary for Africa

Joseph the Dreamer

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:11).

“Faith, patience, forbearance, heavenly-mindedness, trust in your wise, heavenly Father, are the perfect blossoms which mature amidst clouds and disappointments and bereavements.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E.G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 934.

Suggested Reading: *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, pp. 96–100.

Sunday

December 28

1. JOSEPH’S FIRST DREAM

- a. **Who was Joseph, and what did he dream about? Genesis 30:22–24; 37:1–7.**

“There was one [of Jacob’s sons] . . . of a widely different character—the elder son of Rachel, Joseph, whose rare personal beauty seemed but to reflect an inward beauty of mind and heart. Pure, active, and joyous, the lad gave evidence also of moral earnestness and firmness. He listened to his father’s instructions and loved to obey God.”—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 72.

“The angel of God instructed Joseph in dreams which he innocently related to his brethren.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 138.

- b. **How did Joseph’s brothers understand the meaning of his dream with reference to themselves? Genesis 37:8.**

“Joseph dreamed that while they were all engaged binding sheaves of grain, his sheaf arose and stood upright, and the sheaves of all the rest stood round about and bowed before his sheaf. No sooner was his dream related than they all understood its significance. His brothers exclaimed with indignation, ‘Shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?’”—*The Signs of the Times*, December 18, 1879.

2. JOSEPH'S SECOND DREAM

- a. In which way was the second dream different from the first dream? Genesis 37:9.
-

“Soon the Lord gave Joseph another dream of the same import, but more strikingly significant. This dream he also related to his father and his brethren.”—*The Signs of the Times*, December 18, 1879.

- b. How did Joseph's father react to his dream? Genesis 37:10.
-

“Soon [Joseph] had another dream, of similar import, which he also related: ‘Behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.’ This dream was interpreted as readily as the first. The father, who was present, spoke reprovingly—‘What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?’ (Genesis 37:9, 10).”—*Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 210.

- c. How was Jacob's reaction to the dream different from Joseph's brothers' reaction? Genesis 37:11.
-

“Jacob appeared to regard the dreams of his son with indifference. But he had been often instructed by the Lord in dreams himself, and he believed that the Lord was teaching Joseph in the same manner. He reproved Joseph that his true feelings might not be discovered by his envious brothers.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 139.

“Notwithstanding the apparent severity of his words, Jacob believed that the Lord was revealing the future to Joseph.

“As the lad stood before his brothers, his beautiful countenance lighted up with the Spirit of Inspiration, they could not withhold their admiration; but they did not choose to renounce their evil ways, and they hated the purity that reproved their sins.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 210.

“The Lord works in His own way and according to His own devising. Let men pray that they may be divested of self, and may be in harmony with heaven.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 5, 1896.

3. TIME REVEALS ALL

- a. Many years later, how would Joseph eventually recognize the fulfillment of his first dream about the sheaves of grain? Genesis 42:6–9.

“[During the famine, Jacob’s sons] were directed to the king’s deputy, and with other applicants they came to present themselves before the ruler of the land. And they ‘bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth.’ ‘Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him’ (Genesis 42:6, 8). His Hebrew name had been exchanged for the one bestowed upon him by the king, and there was little resemblance between the prime minister of Egypt and the stripling whom they had sold to the Ishmaelites. As Joseph saw his brothers stooping and making obeisance, his dreams came to his mind, and the scenes of the past rose vividly before him.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 224.

- b. How many years passed before the first dream would be fulfilled? Genesis 37:2; 41:46, 53, 54; 42:6; 45:6.

- c. Why did God allow such a length of time to pass before the vision would be fulfilled? 2 Peter 3:8, 9; compare Genesis 37:4, 11 with Genesis 45:15.

“Many who have never been placed in positions of trial appear to be excellent Christians, their lives seem faultless; but God sees that they have traits of character that must be revealed to them before they can perceive and correct them. . . . In the providence of God we are placed in different positions to call into exercise qualities of mind calculated to develop character under a variety of circumstances. . . . Professed Christians may live unexceptionable lives so far as outward appearance is concerned; but when a change of circumstances throws them into entirely different positions, strong traits of character are discovered, which would have remained hidden had their surroundings continued the same.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 55, 56.

“God designed that [Joseph] should obtain an experience by temptations, adversity, and hardships, to prepare him to fill an exalted position.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1097.

4. TESTING MOMENTS

- a. Discuss some other reasons why God allows certain experiences to last longer than we would like. Psalm 26:2; Hebrews 12:11; James 5:7–11; Revelation 14:12 (first part).
-

“None who receive God’s word are exempt from difficulty and trial; but when affliction comes, the true Christian does not become restless, distrustful, or despondent. Though we cannot see the definite outcome of affairs, or discern the purpose of God’s providences, we are not to cast away our confidence. Remembering the tender mercies of the Lord, we should cast our care upon Him, and with patience wait for His salvation. Through conflict the spiritual life is strengthened. Trials well borne will develop steadfastness of character and precious spiritual graces. The perfect fruit of faith, meekness, and love often matures best amid storm clouds and darkness.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 60, 61.

- b. What is the greatest challenge to our faith during a prolonged trial? Hebrews 10:35–39; Psalm 27:14.
-

“Because circumstances change and disappointments come, because you do not have as much help as you hoped to receive for the building up of the work, you are not therefore to become disheartened. Lay every care at the feet of the Redeemer. ‘Ask, and ye shall receive’ (John 16:24). Do your best, and then wait, patiently, hopefully, rejoicingly, because the promise of God cannot fail. Christ’s life of untiring effort has been recorded for our encouragement. He did not fail nor become discouraged. In time of trial, be patient. Patience is a precious jewel. It will bring health to heart and mind. Wait on the Lord until He sees that you are ready to receive and appreciate the blessings for which you ask. Exercise faith, even though the trials are severe. ‘Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen’ (Hebrews 11:1). Of faith hope is born.

“It requires self-control to accept disappointment meekly; but Jesus understands your needs. Every prayer offered to Him in sincerity and faith will be answered. Having done your best, refuse to give way to discouragement and despair. When hedged about with apparently insurmountable difficulties, then is the time above all others to trust in the Lord.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 30, 1912.

5. A DIVINE REVELATION

- a. How did Joseph ultimately believe that these particular dreams were divine revelations, despite his brothers' prior rejections? Genesis 40:8; 41:15, 16.

“Joseph did not take the glory to himself. He pointed Pharaoh to God, saying, ‘It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace’ (Genesis 41:16).

“Through the wisdom given him of God, Joseph could see the true meaning of the dream. He saw the wonderful workings of God, and he laid the whole matter distinctly before Pharaoh.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, March 11, 1897.

“Joseph’s reply to the king reveals his humility and his faith in God. He modestly disclaims the honor of possessing in himself superior wisdom. ‘It is not in me.’ God alone can explain these mysteries.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 220.

- b. What is God’s purpose in giving certain dreams and visions in the last days? Joel 2:28–31; Acts 10:9–28.

“I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that Word we are to be judged. God has, in that Word, promised to give visions in the ‘last days’; not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and to correct those who err from Bible truth. Thus God dealt with Peter when He was about to send him to preach to the Gentiles.”—*Early Writings*, p. 78.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why should we be careful not to mock someone who has had a dream?
2. Explain why human nature doesn’t like to bow to another in authority.
3. What is the purpose of trials in the Christian’s life?
4. Which characteristic of our faith will trials help us develop?
5. Should we expect more dreams and visions to come in the future?

God's Plan for Joseph

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12, 13).

“God’s way, not man’s way, is to be taken as the guide of action. He has a plan, well and wisely ordered. He has revealed this plan to us in His Word, and He expects us to take it as our guide in all things, great and small. Man is not to make plans according to his finite judgment. He is to search for and find God’s plan.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 18, pp. 270, 271.

Suggested Reading: *The Signs of the Times*, December 18, 1879.

Sunday

January 4

1. JOSEPH’S FIRST JOURNEY ALONE

- a. **Why was it significant that Joseph set off to find his brothers alone? Genesis 37:12–14.**

“[Jacob] . . . sent Joseph to find [his brethren] and bring him word as to their welfare. Had Jacob known the real feeling of his sons toward Joseph, he would not have trusted him alone with them; but this they had carefully concealed. With a joyful heart, Joseph parted from his father, neither the aged man nor the youth dreaming of what would happen before they should meet again.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 210.

- b. **Why was it essential for Joseph to meet the man who told him his brothers’ whereabouts? Genesis 37:15–17, 28.**
-

“When Joseph arrived at the place where his father supposed his brethren were, he did not find them. As he was traveling from field to field in search of them, a stranger learned his errand and told him they had gone to Dothan. He had already traveled fifty miles, and, a distance of fifteen more lay before him. This was a long journey for the youth; but he performed it cheerfully.”—*The Signs of the Times*, December 18, 1879.

2. THE BROTHERS' PLOT

- a. **What was the first thing that came to the brothers' minds when they saw Joseph coming, and why? Genesis 37:18–20.**
-

“At length [Joseph] saw his brethren in the distance and hastened to greet them. They also saw him coming, his gay colored coat making him easily recognized; but as they beheld it, their feelings of envy, jealousy, and hatred were aroused. They did not consider the long journey he had made on foot to meet them; they did not think of his weariness and hunger, and that as their brother he had claims upon their hospitality, their tender consideration and brotherly love. The sight of that coat which signaled him in the distance filled them with a Satanic frenzy.”—*The Signs of the Times*, December 18, 1879.

- b. **How was the devil trying to thwart God's plan to use Joseph to save His people? Genesis 15:12–14; 37:20; Ephesians 6:11, 12. In the long run, who would the brothers really be killing had they succeeded in their plans against Joseph? Genesis 42:1, 2.**
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- c. **In his efforts to spoil God's plan for Joseph and his family, what ultimate plan was the devil trying to thwart? Genesis 3:15; 22:16–18; Galatians 3:16.**
-

“The murder of Abel was the first example of the enmity that God had declared would exist between the serpent and the seed of the woman—between Satan and his subjects and Christ and His followers.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 77.

“By leading Israel to this daring insult and blasphemy to Jehovah [at Sinai, when Moses found them bowing in adoration before a golden image], Satan had planned to cause their ruin. Since they had proved themselves to be so utterly degraded, so lost to all sense of the privileges and blessings that God had offered them, and to their own solemn and repeated pledges of loyalty, the Lord would, he believed, divorce them from Himself and devote them to destruction. Thus would be secured the extinction of the seed of Abraham, that seed of promise that was to preserve the knowledge of the living God, and through whom He was to come—the true Seed, that was to conquer Satan. The great rebel had planned to destroy Israel, and thus thwart the purposes of God.”—*Ibid.*, p. 335.

3. THE BATTLE FOR THE SOUL

- a. **Upon whom did God's Spirit move to save Joseph from death, and why did God select this particular brother? Genesis 37:19–22; 29:31, 32.**
-

"[Joseph's brothers] would have executed their purpose but for Reuben. He shrank from participating in the murder of his brother, and proposed that Joseph be cast alive into a pit and left there to perish."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 211.

"[Reuben] pleaded for Joseph, showing with clear arguments what guilt would ever rest upon them, and, that the curse of God would come upon them for such a crime."—*The Signs of the Times*, December 18, 1879.

- b. **What was God's plan for Joseph at this point? Psalm 105:16, 17. What was Reuben's plan? Genesis 37:22 (last part).**
-

"[Reuben] proposed to have him cast alive into a pit, and left there to perish, meaning to take him out privately and return him to his father."—*Ibid.*

- c. **On which other brother did God then have to work to carry out His plans, and why did God have to ensure that Reuben was not around at the time? Genesis 37:25–30.**
-

"Having persuaded all to consent to this plan, Reuben left the company, fearing that he might fail to control his feelings, and that his real intentions would be discovered. . . .

"Judah now proposed to sell their brother to these [Ishmaelites] heathen traders instead of leaving him to die. While he would be effectually put out of their way, they would remain clear of his blood; 'for,' he urged, 'he is our brother and our flesh' (Genesis 37:27). To this proposition all agreed, and Joseph was quickly drawn out of the pit. . . .

"Reuben returned to the pit, but Joseph was not there. In alarm and self-reproach he rent his garments and sought his brothers, exclaiming, 'The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?' (Verse 30). Upon learning the fate of Joseph, and that it would now be impossible to recover him, Reuben was induced to unite with the rest in the attempt to conceal their guilt."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 211, 212.

4. OUR PROTECTOR

- a. Even though Joseph was outside of the protection of his earthly father, who was still with him? Genesis 39:2; Psalm 103:13.
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“Joseph’s brethren flattered themselves that they were taking a sure course to prevent the fulfillment of Joseph’s strange dreams. But the Lord controlled events and caused the cruel course of Joseph’s brethren to bring about the fulfillment of the dreams which they were laboring to frustrate. Joseph was greatly afflicted to be separated from his father, and his bitterest sorrow was in reflecting upon his father’s grief. But God did not leave Joseph to go into Egypt alone. Angels prepared the way for his reception.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 130, 131.

- b. What do we always need to keep in mind regarding God’s control and jurisdiction over all human life? Job 2:3–6; Psalm 56:11.
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“Study the history of Joseph and of Daniel. The Lord did not prevent the plottings of men who sought to do them harm; but He caused all these devices to work for good to His servants, who amid trial and conflict preserved their faith and loyalty.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 477.

- c. What assurance can a believer in Christ have in God’s care for him or her? John 10:27–29; 1 Peter 5:6, 7.
-
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“Christ says to man, You are mine. I have bought you. You are now only a rough stone; but if you will place yourself in My hands, I will polish you, and the luster with which you shall shine will bring honor to My name. No man shall pluck you out of My hand. I will make you My peculiar treasure. On My coronation day, you will be a jewel in My crown of rejoicing.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 267.

“The present and eternal security of men is their surety, Jesus Christ the righteous. No man will be able to pluck the believing soul out of His hands. . . . By keeping the love of God in the heart, the love of the world is kept out, and we become built up in the most holy faith.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, February 17, 1898.

5. COOPERATING WITH GOD

- a. To those who put their trust in God as Joseph did, what is the promise? Psalm 37:4, 5; Proverbs 3:5, 6.

“Spread every plan before God with fasting, [and] with the humbling of the soul before the Lord Jesus, and commit thy ways unto the Lord. The sure promise is, He will direct the paths. He is infinite in resources. The Holy One of Israel, who calls the host of heaven by name, and holds the stars of heaven in position, has you individually in His keeping. . . .

“I would that all could realize what possibilities and probabilities there are for all who make Christ their sufficiency and their trust. The life hid with Christ in God ever has a refuge; he can say, ‘I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me’ (Philippians 4:13).”—*Country Living*, p. 28.

- b. In the Christian journey, what are we to work out and how? Philippians 2:12, 13.

“No man can of himself work out his own salvation, and God cannot do this work for him without his cooperation. But when man works earnestly, God works with him, giving him power to become a son of God.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 372.

“God and the human being are to cooperate. All are to work out that which God works in.”—*To Be Like Jesus*, p. 120.

“It means everything to us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. God works in us, to will and to do of His good pleasure. If we let Him work, He will work. Our reward in heaven above depends on our daily walk and conversation here below. We can be Christians here. And to be a Christian, it is not necessary that we live in depression, mourning because we cannot have our own way. If we are Christians indeed, Christ is formed within, the hope of glory.”—*The Upward Look*, p. 204.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain why seemingly small decisions can be life-changing.
2. In what kind of warfare are Christians involved?
3. How can the Spirit of God influence us to allow God’s will to be done?
4. Why should we not fear what man can do to us?
5. Is it God or humanity that is to work for our salvation?

Jacob's Influence

“Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

“In the formation of character . . . , no other influences count so much as the influence of the home.”—*Education*, p. 283.

Suggested Reading: *Child Guidance*, pp. 17–25.

Sunday

January 11

1. JACOB'S PARENTAL MISTAKE

a. **Where did Jacob go wrong in rearing his children? Genesis 37:2, 3.**

“Parents should show no partiality, but should treat all their children with tenderness, remembering that they are the purchase of Christ's blood. Children imitate their parents; hence great care should be taken to give them correct models.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 319.

b. **How did this mistake affect the rest of the brothers? Genesis 37:4.**

“[Joseph's] mother being dead, his affections clung the more closely to the father, and Jacob's heart was bound up in this child of his old age. He 'loved Joseph more than all his children' (Genesis 37:3).

“But even this affection was to become a cause of trouble and sorrow. Jacob unwisely manifested his preference for Joseph, and this excited the jealousy of his other sons.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 209.

“Fathers and mothers should carefully and prayerfully study the characters of their children. They should seek to repress and restrain those traits that are too prominent, and to encourage others which may be deficient, thus securing harmonious development. . . . The ill-balanced mind, the hasty temper, the fretfulness, envy, or jealousy, bear witness to parental neglect. These evil traits of character bring great unhappiness to their possessors.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 66, 67.

2. FROM CAUSE TO EFFECT

- a. **In what way did Jacob's wives foster a wrong spirit in their children? Genesis 29:30–32; 30:1–8, 20.**

“The sin of Jacob . . . revealed its bitter fruit in the character and life of his sons. As these sons arrived at manhood they developed serious faults. The results of polygamy were manifest in the household. This terrible evil tends to dry up the very springs of love, and its influence weakens the most sacred ties. The jealousy of the several mothers had embittered the family relation, the children had grown up contentious and impatient of control, and the father's life was darkened with anxiety and grief.”—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 72.

“Rachel was ever the one best loved; but [Jacob's] preference for her excited envy and jealousy, and his life was embittered by the rivalry between the sister-wives.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 189, 190.

- b. **How can a wrong spirit manifested by the parents affect the character development of the children? Ephesians 6:4; Ezekiel 16:44; Romans 2:21. How can we set the right example? 1 Corinthians 9:27; 1 Peter 2:21–23.**

“When fathers and mothers realize how their children copy them, they will watch carefully every word and gesture.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1118.

“How earnestly and perseveringly the artist labors to transfer to canvas a perfect likeness of his model; and how diligently the sculptor hews and chisels out the stone into a counterpart of the copy he is following. So the parents should labor to shape, polish, and refine their children after the pattern given them in Christ Jesus. As the patient artist studies, and works, and forms plans to make the results of his labors more perfect, so should the parent consider time well spent that is occupied in training the children for useful lives and fitting them for the immortal kingdom.”—*Child Guidance*, pp. 476, 477.

“When I have felt roiled and was tempted to speak words that I would be ashamed of, I would keep silent and pass right out of the room and ask God to give me patience to teach these children. Then I could go back and talk with them, and tell them they must not do this wrong again. We can take such a position in this matter that we shall not provoke the children to wrath. We should speak kindly and patiently, remembering all the time how wayward we are and how we want to be treated by our heavenly Father.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 254, 255.

3. THE BROTHERS' DECEPTION

- a. **When is the temptation to tell a lie the strongest? Genesis 37:27–32; 3:11–13; 4:9, 10.**
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“How true it is that one sin leads to another; and how forcibly is this truth illustrated in the case of Cain! He seemed surprised at the question, ‘Where is Abel thy brother?’ (Genesis 4:9). He had gone so far in sin, had so far yielded himself to the influence of Satan, that he had lost a sense of the presence of God, and of His greatness and knowledge. So he lied to the Lord to cover up his guilt.”—*The Signs of the Times*, December 16, 1886.

“While Satan can employ fraud and sophistry to accomplish his objects, God cannot lie; while Lucifer, like the serpent, can choose a tortuous course, turning, twisting, gliding, to conceal himself, God moves only in a direct, straightforward line.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 319.

- b. **How did the brothers' deceptive trickery bring upon themselves trouble and heartache? Genesis 37:34, 35; 42:36–38.**
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“‘Know now,’ [Joseph’s brothers] said, ‘whether it be thy son’s coat or no’ (Genesis 37:32). They had looked forward to this scene with dread, but they were not prepared for the heart-rending anguish, the utter abandonment of grief, which they were compelled to witness. ‘It is my son’s coat,’ said Jacob; ‘an evil beast hath devoured him. Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces’ (Verse 33). Vainly his sons and daughters attempted to comfort him. . . . Time seemed to bring no alleviation of his grief. ‘I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning’ (Verse 35), was his despairing cry. The young men, terrified at what they had done, yet dreading their father’s reproaches, still hid in their own hearts the knowledge of their guilt, which even to themselves seemed very great.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 212.

- c. **Explain why the deceptive deeds under which Jacob was now suffering due to his children’s deceit can be linked to his own misleading ways of the past. Genesis 27:8–38; Galatians 6:7.**
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“Every seed sown produces a harvest of its kind. So it is in human life.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 84.

4. THE FRUITS OF SIN

- a. What were the sinful passions which Jacob's sons cherished towards Joseph? Genesis 37:3–5, 11, 23, 24.

“The favor with which Jacob regarded Joseph could not be concealed, and the gorgeous colored coat which he had given him was a clear evidence to his sons of his partiality. This they thought gave them sufficient reason for harboring jealousy, hatred, and revenge in their hearts.”—*The Signs of the Times*, December 18, 1879.

“The law of God takes note of the jealousy, envy, hatred, malignity, revenge, lust, and ambition that surge through the soul, but have not found expression in outward action because the opportunity, not the will, has been wanting.”—*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 526.

- b. When you harbor these sinful passions, where can they lead—and who leads us there? Proverbs 27:4; James 1:13–15.

“Envy and jealousy are like two sisters who blend together in their workings. Envy will lead a man to desire some good which another possesses, and will urge him to use every means in his power to bring down and injure the character and reputation of one in whose place he desires to be.”—*The Signs of the Times*, November 2, 1888.

“The love of Jesus in the soul never leads to malice and envy.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 234.

- c. When these sinful passions are cherished in the heart, what are humans capable of doing? Genesis 37:18–20; Proverbs 6:34, 35; 1 John 3:11–15.

“[Joseph's siblings] had observed their father's strong love for Joseph and were envious at him. Their envy grew into hatred and finally to murder.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 127.

“Envy is the offspring of pride, and if it is entertained in the heart, it will lead to hatred, and eventually to revenge and murder.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 651.

“Murder first exists in the mind. He who gives hatred a place in his heart is setting his feet in the path of the murderer, and his offerings are abhorrent to God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 310.

5. THE CHRISTIAN HOME

- a. Name some important guidelines for speech within a Christian home. Ephesians 4:21–27, 31, 32; Revelation 14:5.

“There is a sacred circle around every family which should be preserved. No other one has any right in that sacred circle. The husband and wife should be all to each other. The wife should have no secrets to keep from her husband and let others know, and the husband should have no secrets to keep from his wife to relate to others.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 177.

“If, in their early childhood, children are not perseveringly and patiently trained in the right way, they will form wrong habits. These habits will develop in their future life and will corrupt others. Those whose minds have received a low cast, who have been cheapened by wrong home influences, by deceptive practices, carry their wrong habits with them through life. If they make a profession of religion, these habits will be revealed in their religious life.”—*Child Guidance*, pp. 200, 201.

- b. Why is it important that we take warning from the sin of deception manifested in the lives of Jacob and his children? John 8:44; 1 Peter 2:1–3; Revelation 21:27.

“Truth is of God; deception in all its myriad forms is of Satan, and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one. Those who have learned of Christ will ‘have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness’ (Ephesians 5:11).”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 252.

“The Lord hates all deception, secrecy, and guile. This is Satan’s work; the work of God is open and frank.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 274.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why is it vital to love all our children equally?
2. What should parents be mindful of when rearing their children?
3. Is there any safety in telling lies, even so-called white lies?
4. How can we commit murder in our heart?
5. How can lies and deceit destroy a Christian home?

The Journey to Egypt

“He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant” (Psalm 105:17).

“What Abraham was in the land of his sojourn, what Joseph was in Egypt, and Daniel in the courts of Babylon, the Hebrew people were to be among the nations. They were to reveal God to men.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 27.

Suggested Reading: *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 126–131.

Sunday

January 18

1. GOD’S PROVIDENCE AT WORK

- a. List at least seven acts of providence which God had to arrange before Joseph could be sent to Egypt? Psalm 105:17; Genesis 37:13–28.

“The way of God’s choosing may seem dark, yet it is the surest way to the light. In the midst of apparent disaster and defeat, God’s providence is working out His purposes.”—*The Signs of the Times*, July 26, 1883.

- b. Out of all of Jacob’s sons, why did God select Joseph as the one to be sent to Egypt for a great work? Genesis 37:2; 39:6; Acts 7:9.

“Joseph listened to his father’s instructions and feared the Lord. He was more obedient to his father’s righteous teachings than any of his brethren. He treasured his instructions, and, with integrity of heart, loved to obey God. He was grieved at the wrong conduct of some of his brethren, and meekly entreated them to pursue a righteous course, and leave off their wicked acts. This only embittered them against him. His hatred of sin was such that he could not endure to see his brethren sinning against God. He laid the matter before his father, hoping that his authority might reform them.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 126.

2. THE LONELY JOURNEY

- a. In his journey to Egypt as a slave, how might Joseph have felt about God's leading in his life? Genesis 37:28; Psalms 88:3-5; 73:13, 14.
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"As the caravan journeyed southward toward the borders of Canaan, the boy could discern in the distance the hills among which lay his father's tents. Bitterly he wept at thought of that loving father in his loneliness and affliction. . . . With a trembling heart he looked forward to the future."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 213.

- b. When are we tempted to question God's leading the most? Job 2:7-10; Exodus 16:2, 3; 17:1-3.
-

"Many who sincerely consecrate their lives to God's service are surprised and disappointed to find themselves, as never before, confronted by obstacles and beset by trials and perplexities. They pray for Christlikeness of character, for a fitness for the Lord's work, and they are placed in circumstances that seem to call forth all the evil of their nature. Faults are revealed of which they did not even suspect the existence. Like Israel of old they question, 'If God is leading us, why do all these things come upon us?'"—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 470.

- c. Why did God allow lonely times to come upon Joseph? 1 Peter 4:12, 13; Hebrews 12:5, 6; Romans 8:28.
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"What a change in situation—from the tenderly cherished son to the despised and helpless slave! . . .

"But, in the providence of God, even this experience was to be a blessing to him. He had learned in a few hours that which years might not otherwise have taught him. His father, strong and tender as his love had been, had done him wrong by his partiality and indulgence. This unwise preference had angered his brothers and provoked them to the cruel deed that had separated him from his home. Its effects were manifest also in his own character. Faults had been encouraged that were now to be corrected. He was becoming self-sufficient and exacting. Accustomed to the tenderness of his father's care, he felt that he was unprepared to cope with the difficulties before him, in the bitter, uncared-for life of a stranger and a slave."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 213.

3. FROM CHILDHOOD TO MANHOOD

- a. **What promise can all God-fearing parents hold onto as they rear their children? Proverbs 22:6.**
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“[When sold into slavery, Joseph’s] thoughts turned to his father’s God. In his childhood he had been taught to love and fear Him. Often in his father’s tent he had listened to the story of the vision that Jacob saw as he fled from his home an exile and a fugitive. He had been told of the Lord’s promises to Jacob, and how they had been fulfilled—how, in the hour of need, the angels of God had come to instruct, comfort, and protect him. And he had learned of the love of God in providing for men a Redeemer. Now all these precious lessons came vividly before him.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 213, 214.

- b. **Who only could Joseph call upon in his lonely exile? How would this decision change his life? Psalms 27:10; 34:18, 19; Romans 10:13.**
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“[Joseph’s] soul thrilled with the high resolve to prove himself true to God—under all circumstances to act as became a subject of the King of heaven. He would serve the Lord with undivided heart; he would meet the trials of his lot with fortitude and perform every duty with fidelity. One day’s experience had been the turning point in Joseph’s life. Its terrible calamity had transformed him from a petted child to a man, thoughtful, courageous, and self-possessed.”—*Ibid.*, p. 214.

- c. **When we are tempted to feel forsaken and that all is lost, what should we remember? Psalms 37:25; 33:18, 22; 73:25, 26; Hebrews 12:1–3.**
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“In every affliction God has a purpose to work out for our good. Every blow that destroys an idol, every providence that weakens our hold upon earth and fastens our affections more firmly upon God, is a blessing. The pruning may be painful for a time, but afterward it ‘yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness’ (Hebrews 12:11). . . . The very trial that taxes our faith the most severely and makes it seem as though God had forsaken us, is to lead us more clearly to Him. . . . Let no Christian feel that he is forsaken when the hour of trial comes upon him.”—*The Review and Herald*, April 10, 1894.

4. FAITH THAT OVERCOMES

- a. **Despite his youth, what victory did Joseph gain over the circumstances he faced? Genesis 39:1, 2; Psalm 40:1–4.**
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“God in His great mercy will give to all His believing people efficiency and power for His work and service, even as He gave power to Joseph, Samuel, Daniel, Timothy, and scores of others who availed themselves of His promises. They believed Him and relied upon Him, and this was their righteousness. Men and women have to move by faith. They have to press their way through the cloud of objections which Satan brings up to hinder their progress. When God sees that they will trust Him as their helper and their efficiency, they may pass safely through the great darkness of men’s unconsecration.”—*The Upward Look*, p. 206.

- b. **What does the Bible say about those who allow circumstances to override their faith? Numbers 13:32, 33; Hebrews 3:17–19; James 1:8.**
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“The living Christ demands self-denial and strong faith. Circumstances are not to rule the life. The child of God, the heir of heaven, cannot drift hither and thither.”—*The Review and Herald*, November 9, 1897.

- c. **What promises are given if we overcome our trials, and how can we overcome? Numbers 14:24; 1 John 5:4; Revelation 3:21.**
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“Now is the time to show who are the true Calebs, who will not deny that the walls are high, the giants mighty, but who believe that this very fact will make the victory more glorious. There are great difficulties and trials before us. It will require strong courage and persevering effort to go forward. But all now depends on our faith in the Captain who has led us safely thus far. Shall we let unbelief come in now? Shall we weakly yield to distrust and fear? Shall we compromise with the world, and turn away from the heavenly Canaan?”—*Ibid.*, November 29, 1881.

“While the cowards and murmurers perished in the wilderness, faithful Caleb had a home in the promised Canaan. ‘Them that honor Me I will honor,’ saith the Lord.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 304.

5. ALL IN GOD'S PLAN

- a. Upon Joseph's arrival in Egypt, why was it important that he meet Potiphar? Genesis 39:1, 2. How did God use this meeting to further His plan for Joseph? Genesis 37:36; 39:20; 41:9–14.

“Joseph regarded his being sold into Egypt as the greatest calamity that could have befallen him; but he saw the necessity of trusting in God as he had never done when protected by his father's love. Joseph brought God with him into Egypt, and the fact was made apparent by his cheerful demeanor amid his sorrow. As the ark of God brought rest and prosperity to Israel, so did this God-loving, God-fearing youth bring a blessing to Egypt.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1096.

- b. Why is it that God's plans do not always reflect our personal desires? Proverbs 16:9; Isaiah 55:8, 9; Romans 8:26.

“To every sincere prayer an answer will come. It may not come just as you desire, or at the time you look for it; but it will come in the way and at the time that will best meet your need. The prayers you offer in loneliness, in weariness, in trial, God answers, not always according to your expectations, but always for your good.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 258.

“We all desire an immediate answer to our prayers and are tempted to become discouraged if our prayer is not immediately answered. Now, my experience has taught me that this is a great mistake. The delay is for our special benefit. We have a chance to see whether our faith is true and sincere or changeable like the waves of the sea.”—*Counsels on Health*, pp. 380, 381.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain how God's providence works.
2. How can trials cause us to question our faith?
3. Why is our salvation more important to God than our temporal condition?
4. What are we to do when we meet trying circumstances?
5. How should we expect God to answer our prayers?

Faithfulness in All Things

“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10).

“If you are faithful in a few things, your faithfulness will testify that you are a student in the school of Christ.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, November 7, 1895.

Suggested Reading: *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 272–283.

Sunday

January 25

1. A RIGHT ATTITUDE

- a. How can we tell that Joseph always manifested a right attitude, regardless of what happened to him? Genesis 39:2, 23.

“Joseph did not complain at his lot, nor question why the Lord permitted him to suffer for righteousness’ sake. He did not allow any cloud of despondency to settle upon his heart. He believed in God and patiently waited for his salvation. He determined that this affliction [while in prison] should serve as an occasion to glorify God and benefit his associates.”—*The Review and Herald*, February 21, 1888.

- b. What will others see when we have the right attitude in being faithful to God? Genesis 39:3; Matthew 5:16; 2 Corinthians 3:2.

“From the palace of the Pharaohs [Joseph’s] influence was felt throughout the land, and the knowledge of God spread far and wide.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 332.

“Joseph carried his religion everywhere, and this was the secret of his unwavering fidelity.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1097.

“The good works of God’s people have a more powerful influence than words.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 443.

2. BEING FAITHFUL

- a. **Why did Potiphar promote Joseph to be a ruler over his household? Genesis 39:3, 4.**

“The marked prosperity which attended everything placed under Joseph’s care was not the result of a direct miracle; but his industry, care, and energy were crowned with the divine blessing. Joseph attributed his success to the favor of God, and even his idolatrous master accepted this as the secret of his unparalleled prosperity. Without steadfast, well-directed effort, however, success could never have been attained. God was glorified by the faithfulness of His servant.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 214, 217.

- b. **What are we instructed regarding faithfulness to our duties? Luke 16:10–12; Colossians 3:22, 23.**

“The humble, common duties of life are all to be performed with fidelity; ‘heartily,’ says the apostle, ‘as to the Lord.’ Whatever our department of labor, be it housework or field work or intellectual pursuits, we may perform it to the glory of God so long as we make Christ first and last and best in everything.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 459.

“If man will discharge his duties faithfully wherever he may be, he will become a power for good. God gave Joseph favor with the keeper of the prison, and to faithful Joseph was committed the charge of all the prisoners.”—*The Signs of the Times*, January 8, 1880.

“Heart and soul are to be put into work of any kind; then there is cheerfulness and efficiency. . . . Faithfulness in the discharge of every duty makes the work noble, and reveals a character that God can approve.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1112.

- c. **How was Joseph’s faithfulness as a lowly servant finally rewarded by God? Genesis 41:41–43; Proverbs 22:29.**

“A strong, well-balanced, symmetrical character is built by the thorough and faithful performance of duty. Joseph had an unblemished character, and as he was found faithful in that which was least, he was finally entrusted with the affairs of a nation.”—*The Signs of the Times*, May 25, 1891.

3. FROM BONDAGE TO SONSHIP, AGAIN

- a. How much trust did Potiphar have in Joseph's integrity of character? Genesis 39:6; 1 Thessalonians 4:11, 12.

"It was [God's] purpose that in purity and uprightness the believer in God should appear in marked contrast to the worshippers of idols—that thus the light of heavenly grace might shine forth amid the darkness of heathenism.

"Joseph's gentleness and fidelity won the heart of the chief captain, who came to regard him as a son rather than a slave."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 217.

- b. What kind of influence will true men and women of God bring to those with whom they associate? Genesis 39:5; 30:27.

"As the ark of God brought rest and prosperity to Israel, so did this God-loving, God-fearing youth bring a blessing to Egypt. This was manifested in so marked a manner that Potiphar, in whose house he served, attributed all his blessings to his purchased slave, and made him a son rather than a servant. It is God's purpose that those who love and honor His name shall be honored also themselves, and that the glory given to God through them shall be reflected upon themselves."—*The Youth's Instructor*, March 11, 1897.

- c. How easy will it be to find honest, upright men and women in the last days? 2 Timothy 3:1–4. How do we know that the warning in Timothy refers to the professed people of God? 2 Timothy 3:5–9; 2 Peter 2:1–3.

"The cause of present truth is suffering for men who are loyal to a sense of right and duty, whose moral integrity is firm, and whose energy is equal to the opening providence of God. Such qualifications as these are of more value than untold wealth invested in the work and cause of God."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 23.

"When the Lord makes up His jewels, the true, the frank, the honest, will be looked upon with pleasure. Angels are employed in making crowns for such ones, and upon these star-gemmed crowns will be reflected, with splendor, the light which radiates from the throne of God."—*Maranatha*, p. 309.

4. THE SPIRIT OF A LEARNER

- a. What is significant about Joseph becoming the slave of a high-ranking officer of the Egyptian army? Genesis 39:1; 41:33–37.
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“Arriving in Egypt, Joseph was sold to Potiphar, captain of the king’s guard, in whose service he remained for ten years. . . .

“The youth was brought in contact with men of rank and learning, and he acquired a knowledge of science, of languages, and of affairs—an education needful to the future prime minister of Egypt.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 214, 217.

- b. Name some great leaders and their previous occupations. 1 Kings 19:19–21; Exodus 3:1; Matthew 4:18, 19. Why does God often choose people who are engaged in life’s simple vocations? 1 Corinthians 1:26, 27.
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“As the time comes for [the message of the third angel] to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service. The laborers will be qualified rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. The sins of Babylon will be laid open.”—*Evangelism*, pp. 699, 700.

- c. How is God’s choice of workers different from a human choice? 1 Samuel 16:6–13. What is the Lord looking for? Acts 13:22; Psalm 143:10.
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“The elder [sons of Jesse], from whom Samuel would have chosen, did not possess the qualifications that God saw to be essential in a ruler of His people. Proud, self-centered, self-confident, they were set aside for the one whom they lightly regarded, one who had preserved the simplicity and sincerity of his youth, and who, while little in his own sight, could be trained by God for the responsibilities of the kingdom.”—*Education*, p. 266.

5. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

- a. **How faithful is God in His dealings with men and women? Lamentations 3:22, 23; 1 Thessalonians 5:24; Revelation 19:11.**

“Will the Lord forget His people in this trying hour? Did He forget faithful Noah when judgments were visited upon the antediluvian world? Did He forget Lot when the fire came down from heaven to consume the cities of the plain? Did He forget Joseph surrounded by idolaters in Egypt? Did He forget Elijah when the oath of Jezebel threatened him with the fate of the Baal prophets? Did He forget Jeremiah in the dark and dismal pit of his prison house? Did He forget the three worthies in the fiery furnace? or Daniel in the den of lions? Christ cannot forsake those who are as the apple of His eye, the purchase of His precious blood.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, pp. 445, 446.

- b. **What should give us confidence in God's faithfulness to both save and direct our lives? Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 10:23; 2 Thessalonians 3:3.**

“We lose many precious blessings by failing to bring our needs and cares and sorrows to our Saviour. He is the wonderful Counselor. He looks upon His church with intense interest and with a heart full of tender sympathy. He enters into the depth of our necessities. But our ways are not always His ways. He sees the result of every action, and He asks us to trust patiently in His wisdom, not in the supposedly wise plans of our own making. . . .

“Every sincere prayer that is offered is mingled with the efficacy of Christ's blood. If the answer is deferred, it is because God desires us to show a holy boldness in claiming the pledged word of God. He is faithful who hath promised. He will never forsake the soul who is wholly surrendered to Him.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 74.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important to have the right attitude as a Christian?
2. How should we conduct ourselves in whatever line of work we undertake?
3. What is the greatest witness we can give to the world?
4. What is God looking for today in the hearts of men and women?
5. How can we be assured that the Lord will never let us down?

First Sabbath Offering for the General Conference Educational Center

Roanoke is an American city with a population of just over 300,000—including the surrounding area. It is nestled in the Blue Ridge mountains of southwest Virginia. In 1984, the SDA Reform Movement General Conference moved its headquarters from New Jersey to a scenic valley here. In 1995, a modest and attractive



office building was constructed on an adjoining parcel. Surely we can heartily declare, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us” (1 Samuel 7:12).

Now it’s time for more significant expansion. The worshippers on Sabbath have outgrown the little office sanctuary, and as our outreach has developed around the world, there is a heightened need to represent more effectively the Lord’s work. As a result, the proposed building plan includes a larger chapel, expanded publication offices to spread light-out-of-darkness worldwide, educational facilities for the presentation of training seminars and eventually a missionary school for higher education, as well as a simple wellness facility to bring health and comfort to the infirm, that the name of the Lord may be glorified.

To rightly represent our denominational work on an international level is indeed a costly undertaking, so your prayers and financial help are greatly needed in order to make this expansion a reality.

“Those who are seeking to advance [God’s] work should give the very best they have, that the work may illustrate the perfection God requires.

“God must be honored by the work that is done for Him at this time. His work must move forward with stability. Faithfulness and fitness must appear in its every line. The buildings that are erected must correspond with the providences of God and with their relation to the work to be done in other places.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 24, 1902.

The project is great—the time is now. Please do consider how the Lord may be calling you to contribute to this project. Like the widow’s mite, your outstretched hand and generous donation can really go a long way in ministering worldwide through this expanded facility. Thank you in advance, and may God bless you!

Your brethren from the General Conference Council

Joseph's Greatest Test

“Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18).

“Through the integrity of Joseph the life of that [ancient Egyptian nation] was preserved.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 13.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce*, pp. 81–98.

Sunday

February 1

1. TAKE HEED LEST YOU FALL

- a. When things are running smoothly, of what should we always be aware? 1 Corinthians 10:12; Matthew 26:41.

“We should now seek a deep and living experience in the things of God. We have not a moment to lose. Events of vital importance are taking place around us; we are on Satan’s enchanted ground. Sleep not, sentinels of God; the foe is lurking near, ready at any moment, should you become lax and drowsy, to spring upon you and make you his prey.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 601.

- b. While God was blessing Joseph abundantly, what was the devil trying to do? Genesis 39:5–7; 1 Peter 5:8.

“Our great adversary has agents that are constantly hunting for an opportunity to destroy souls, as a lion hunts his prey.”—*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 52.

“Man is naturally inclined to follow Satan’s suggestions, and he cannot successfully resist . . . unless Christ, the mighty Conqueror, dwells in him, guiding his desires, and giving him strength. God alone can limit the power of Satan. He is going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it. He is not off his watch for a single moment, through fear of losing an opportunity to destroy souls.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 341.

2. THE DEVIL'S TRAPS

- a. **What was the purpose of the devil in laying the trap of adultery before Joseph's eyes? Genesis 39:7; Proverbs 5:1–5; 7:22, 23, 27.**

“Few temptations are more dangerous or more fatal to young men than the temptation to sensuality and none if yielded to will prove so decidedly ruinous to soul and body for time and eternity. The welfare of his entire future is suspended upon the decision of a moment.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1097.

“A little time spent in sowing your wild oats, dear young friends, will produce a crop that will embitter your whole life; an hour of thoughtlessness, once yielding to temptation, may turn the whole current of your life in the wrong direction. You can have but one youth; make that useful. When once you have passed over the ground, you can never return to rectify your mistakes.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 59.

- b. **Under which circumstances is a person most prone to fall into the sins of immorality? Genesis 39:11, 12 (first part); Proverbs 7:13–21.**

“All who willfully depart from God's commandments are placing themselves under the control of Satan. Many a man tampers with evil, thinking that he can break away at pleasure; but he is lured on and on, until he finds himself controlled by a will stronger than his own. He cannot escape its mysterious power. Secret sin or master passion may hold him a captive as helpless as was the demoniac of Capernaum.”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 312.

“One may conceal his sin from father, mother, wife, and friends, and yet all lies open before God and is placed in His book of record.”—*Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce*, p. 89.

- c. **Why are we to avoid being alone in compromising situations with the opposite sex? 1 Thessalonians 5:22.**

“All who love Jesus and keep the commandments will seek to avoid the very appearance of evil; not because they are constrained thus to do, but because they are copying a pure model and feel averse to everything contrary to the law written in their hearts.”—*Ibid.*, p. 81.

3. THE CENTER OF OUR THOUGHTS

- a. When Joseph was confronted with the seducing temptation of Potiphar's wife, where were his thoughts centered? Genesis 39:7–9; Colossians 3:1–3.

“Joseph's answer reveals the power of religious principle. He would not betray the confidence of his master on earth, and, whatever the consequences, he would be true to his Master in heaven. Under the inspecting eye of God and holy angels many take liberties of which they would not be guilty in the presence of their fellow men, but Joseph's first thought was of God. ‘How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’ (Genesis 39:9) he said.”—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 75.

“When assailed by temptation, look not to circumstances or to the weakness of self, but to the power of the word. All its strength is yours. ‘Thy word,’ says the psalmist, ‘have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee’ (Psalm 119:11).”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 123.

- b. What was it that made Joseph recoil from her advances? Genesis 39:9; Hebrews 8:10; Psalm 119:10, 11. What happens when we hide God's promises in our heart? 2 Peter 1:4.

“The fear of God, united with the love of that which is noble, pure, and elevating, will guard you from a dishonest action. . . . What a lesson for all youth we have in the history of Joseph. Here moral integrity was preserved under the strongest temptations. How fierce and seductive was the assault upon his virtue! Coming from such a source and in such a form, it was the most likely to corrupt a youthful mind. Joseph was saved by his religious principles, which led him promptly and firmly to resist the device of Satan.”—*Christ Triumphant*, p. 97.

“We shall be tempted in a variety of ways, but when we are tempted we need to remember that a provision has been made whereby we may overcome. . . . Those who truly believe in Christ are made partakers of the divine nature and have power that they can appropriate under every temptation. They will not fall under temptation and be left to defeat. In time of trial they will claim the promises and by these escape the corruptions that are in the world through lust.”—*Ibid.*, p. 197.

“Let the youth be taught to give close study to the word of God. Received into the soul, it will prove a mighty barricade against temptation.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 121.

4. FLEEING FROM TEMPTATION

- a. **What is the only way to meet any sexual temptations? Genesis 39:12; 1 Corinthians 6:18.**
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“Joseph calmly casts his eyes to heaven for help, slips off his loose outer garment, leaving it in the hand of his tempter and while his eye is lighted with determined resolve in the place of unholy passion, he exclaims, ‘How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’ The victory is gained; he flees from the enchanter; he is saved.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1097.

“Do not stop for one moment to reason. Satan would rejoice to see you overthrown by temptation. Do not stop to argue the case with your weak conscience. Turn away from the first step of transgression.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 587.

- b. **In times when the devil is trying to destroy the purity and innocence of children and youth by promoting licentiousness, what can we learn from Joseph? 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Timothy 4:12.**
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“To shield their children from contaminating influences, parents should instruct them in the principles of purity. Those children who in the home form habits of obedience and self-control will have little difficulty in their school life and will escape many of the temptations that beset the youth. Parents should train their children to be true to God under all circumstances and in all places. They should surround them with influences that tend to strengthen character.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 113.

- c. **What practical measures can we take to avoid falling into the way of temptation? Romans 13:14; Psalm 101:3.**
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“Those who would not fall a prey to Satan’s devices, must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts. The mind must not be left to dwell at random upon every subject that the enemy of souls may suggest. The heart must be faithfully sentinelled, or evils without will awaken evils within, and the soul will wander in darkness.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 403.

5. HEAVEN IS WATCHING

- a. Who was watching Joseph when he was faced with the greatest temptation of his life? Genesis 39:2; Proverbs 5:20, 21; 1 Corinthians 4:9.

“Fiery trials were to test still more severely the faith and integrity of Joseph. The morals of the Egyptians were very low. His master’s wife was a licentious woman, and now a temptation to deviate from the path of right, to transgress the law of God, is presented before the youthful exile. His future welfare depends upon the decision of the moment. Will Satan triumph? Will principle now garrison Joseph’s heart? Will he now have the fear of God before him? Will he be loyal and true to the divine law? Angels were regarding this servant of God with intense interest.”—*The Signs of the Times*, January 8, 1880.

- b. Although human eyes may not see what we do and we may hide our private sins from human eyes, what reality should we ever keep before our mind? Hebrews 4:13; Ecclesiastes 12:14.

“If we were to cherish an habitual impression that God sees and hears all that we do and say and keeps a faithful record of our words and actions, and that we must meet it all, we would fear to sin. Let the young ever remember that wherever they are, and whatever they do, they are in the presence of God. No part of our conduct escapes observation. We cannot hide our ways from the Most High. Human laws, though sometimes severe, are often transgressed without detection, and hence with impunity. But not so with the law of God. The deepest midnight is no cover for the guilty one. He may think himself alone, but to every deed there is an unseen witness. The very motives of his heart are open to divine inspection.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 217, 218.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why should the Christian always be vigilant?
2. How can one sin change the direction of our life?
3. How can we best prepare to meet temptation?
4. What steps can we take to avoid falling into licentious sins?
5. When we are alone, away from human beings, and are tempted to sin, what should we ever remember?

Purity in an Age of Decay

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

“What a lesson for all youth we have in the history of Joseph. Here moral integrity was preserved under the strongest temptations.”—*Christ Triumphant*, p. 97.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 390–411.

Sunday

February 8

1. GOD CALLS JOSEPHS TODAY

- a. What is God calling young people like Joseph to be today? Genesis 39:9; 1 Timothy 4:12; Proverbs 31:10–12.

“Do not see how close you can walk upon the brink of a precipice and be safe. Avoid the first approach to danger. The soul’s interests cannot be trifled with. Your capital is your character. Cherish it as you would a golden treasure. Moral purity, self-respect, a strong power of resistance, must be firmly and constantly cherished. There should not be one departure from reserve; one act of familiarity, one indiscretion, may jeopardize the soul in opening the door to temptation, and the power of resistance becomes weakened.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 404.

- b. What damage is done when sexual sins are practiced? Proverbs 6:27–33.

“Few temptations are more dangerous or more fatal to young men than the temptation to sensuality, and none if yielded to will prove so decidedly ruinous to soul and body for time and eternity.”—*Letters to Young Lovers*, p. 69.

“David was a repentant man, and although he confessed and hated his sin, he could not forget it.”—*Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce*, p. 89.

2. MARRIAGE UNDER ATTACK

- a. **What is the only intimate physical relationship which God regards as moral and pure? Genesis 2:21–25; Hebrews 13:4.**
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“When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed in this [marital] relation, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race, it provides for man’s social needs, it elevates the physical, the intellectual, and the moral nature.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 26.

- b. **What happens when the marriage institution, as given by God, is no longer recognized by society as the standard of sexual morality? Isaiah 5:20; Romans 1:26–32; John 3:19, 20.**
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“Everywhere are seen wrecks of humanity, broken-down family altars, broken-up families. There is a strange abandonment of principle, the standard of morality is lowered, and the earth is fast becoming a Sodom. The Sodomitish practices which brought the judgment of God upon the world, and caused it to be deluged with water, and which caused Sodom to be destroyed by fire, are fast increasing. We are nearing the end. God has borne long with the perversity of mankind, but their punishment is no less certain. Let those who profess to be the light of the world depart from all iniquity.”—*Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce*, pp. 120, 121.

- c. **What happens when God’s church allows sexual immorality to exist within her borders? Ephesians 5:11, 12; Romans 2:21–24; Jude 5–7.**
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“Licentiousness, unlawful intimacy, and unholy practices are coming in among us in a large degree; and ministers who are handling sacred things are guilty of sin in this respect. They are coveting their neighbors’ wives, and the seventh commandment is broken. We are in danger of becoming a sister to fallen Babylon, of allowing our churches to become corrupted, and filled with every foul spirit, a cage for every unclean and hateful bird; and will we be clear unless we make decided movements to cure the existing evil?”—*Ibid.*, p. 188.

3. VISUAL SINS ON THE RISE

- a. **With easy access to the Internet through personal computers and other portable electronic devices (smartphones, tablets), which sins of impurity are on the increase? Matthew 5:27, 28; 1 John 2:16.**

“Exciting love stories and impure pictures have a corrupting influence. . . . This is an age when corruption is teeming everywhere. The lust of the eye and corrupt passions are aroused by beholding and by reading. The heart is corrupted through the imagination. The mind takes pleasure in contemplating scenes which awaken the lower and baser passions. These vile images, seen through defiled imagination, corrupt the morals and prepare the deluded, infatuated beings to give loose rein to lustful passions.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 410.

- b. **What can be done to protect ourselves and our children against such strategies of the devil? Luke 11:34, 35; Psalm 101:3; Job 31:1.**

“If parents desire their children to be pure, they must surround them with pure associations such as God can approve.

“With what care parents should guard their children from careless, loose, demoralizing habits! Fathers and mothers, do you realize the importance of the responsibility resting on you? Do you allow your children to associate with other children without being present to know what kind of education they are receiving? Do not allow them to be alone with other children. Give them your special care. Every evening know where they are and what they are doing. Are they pure in all their habits? Have you instructed them in the principles of moral purity?”—*Child Guidance*, p. 114.

- c. **With immorality abounding around us, where should our mind and affections be? Philippians 4:8; 2 Peter 1:4; Colossians 3:1, 2.**

“If in their tender years the minds of children are filled with pleasant images of truth, of purity and goodness, a taste will be formed for that which is pure and elevated, and their imagination will not become easily corrupted or defiled.”—*Ibid.*, p. 116.

“Recreation in the open air, the contemplation of the works of God in nature, will be of the highest benefit.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 653.

“Parents and guardians must themselves maintain purity of heart and life, if they desire their children to be pure.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 27.

4. STANDING FIRM FOR GOD

- a. **Why is it so important to stand up for purity now than it has been in any other time? 2 Timothy 3:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11.**
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“Immorality abounds everywhere. Licentiousness is the special sin of this age. Never did vice lift its deformed head with such boldness as now. The people seem to be benumbed, and the lovers of virtue and true goodness are nearly discouraged by its boldness, strength, and prevalence. . . . The iniquity which abounds is not merely confined to the unbeliever and the scoffer. Would that this were the case, but it is not. Many men and women who profess the religion of Christ are guilty. Even some who profess to be looking for His appearing are no more prepared for that event than Satan himself. They are not cleansing themselves from all pollution.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 328.

- b. **What kind of mind will highly principled, Christian men and women possess? What will this enable them to do? 2 Timothy 1:7; Ephesians 4:13, 14; James 1:6–8.**
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“The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.”—*Education*, p. 57.

- c. **How can we have a mind governed by principle and truth rather than by policy and inclination? Philippians 2:5; Psalm 40:8; Matthew 4:4.**
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“Those who have never learned their duty from God, and acquainted themselves with His purposes concerning them, are not reliable in times of severe conflict with the powers of darkness. They are swayed by external and present appearances. . . .

“In the renewed heart there will be a fixed principle to obey the will of God, because there is a love for what is just, and good, and holy. There will be no hesitating, conferring with the taste, or studying of convenience, or moving in a certain course because others do so. Everyone should live for himself.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 487, 488.

5. AN UNCHANGEABLE PRINCIPLE

- a. What happened when Joseph chose to stand firm for God? Genesis 39:12–20. Why shouldn't we be surprised by this? 2 Timothy 3:12.

“Joseph’s faithful integrity led to the loss of his reputation and his liberty. This is the severest test that the virtuous and God-fearing are subjected to, that vice seems to prosper while virtue is trampled in the dust. The seducer was living in prosperity as a model of virtuous propriety, while Joseph, true to principle, was under a degrading charge of crime the most revolting.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1097.

- b. How firmly should we be prepared to stand in upholding the purity of the marriage institution? Matthew 14:3–10.

“Marriage was from the creation constituted by God a divine ordinance. . . . Then let this, God’s institution of marriage, stand before you as firm as the Sabbath of the fourth commandment.”—*Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce*, p. 159.

“Why need [John the Baptist] have provoked the anger of Herodias by telling Herod that it was unlawful for him to live with his brother’s wife? The forerunner of Christ lost his life by his plain speaking. Why could he not have moved along without incurring the displeasure of those who were living in sin?

“So men who should be standing as faithful guardians of God’s law have argued, till policy has taken the place of faithfulness, and sin is allowed to go unreprieved. When will the voice of faithful rebuke be heard once more in the church?”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 141.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why is the violation of the seventh commandment so treacherous to the soul?
2. How is society today fast fulfilling the prophecies relating to Christ’s return?
3. How can technology become a deadly weapon in the hand of the user?
4. What is the greatest need in the world today?
5. Would you be willing to lay down your life in defending God’s institutions?

The Development of Christian Character

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (James 1:2, 3).

“There are few who realize the influence of the little things of life upon the development of character. Nothing with which we have to do is really small. The varied circumstances that we meet day by day are designed to test our faithfulness and to qualify us for greater trusts.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 222, 223.

Suggested reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 557–567.

Sunday

February 15

1. THE CHRISTIAN'S TRIALS

- a. Why was Joseph permitted to enter yet another trial in his life? Genesis 39:20; Psalm 105:17, 18; 1 Peter 4:14–16.

“The part which Joseph acted in connection with the scenes of the gloomy prison, was that which raised him finally to prosperity and honor. God designed that he should obtain an experience by temptations, adversity, and hardships, to prepare him to fill an exalted position.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1097.

- b. What promises can we keep in mind when passing through a trial? Genesis 39:21; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 4:19.

“God safely guarded that reputation [of Joseph] that was blackened by a wicked accuser, and afterward, in His own good time, caused it to shine.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 145.

“With every temptation we have the promise of God that there shall be a way of escape. Why, then, are so many overcome? It is because they do not put their trust in God.”—*Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, p. 22.

2. TOTAL CONTENTMENT

- a. **How was Joseph's faith unshaken by this severe yet unjust trial? Genesis 39:22, 23.**
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"At the first Joseph was treated with great severity by his jailers. The psalmist says, 'His feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in chains of iron: until the time that his word came to pass; the word of the Lord tried him' (Psalm 105:18, 19, RV). But Joseph's real character shines out, even in the darkness of the dungeon. He held fast his faith and patience; his years of faithful service had been most cruelly repaid, yet this did not render him morose or distrustful. He had the peace that comes from conscious innocence, and he trusted his case with God."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 218.

- b. **When tempted to question God because of the severity of an injustice, whom should we remember? Isaiah 53:7; 1 Peter 2:21–23.**
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"Are you tempted? [The Elder Brother] will deliver. Are you weak? He will strengthen. Are you ignorant? He will enlighten. 'He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds' (Psalm 147:3). Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be opened for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength."—*The Signs of the Times*, January 15, 1902.

- c. **What is evident that Potiphar didn't fully believe his wife's accusation? Genesis 39:20; Proverbs 6:34.**
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"Had Potiphar fully believed the charges of his wife, Joseph would have lost his life. But his past conduct, his modesty and firm integrity, were convincing proof of his innocence; and yet, to save the reputation of his master's house, Joseph was sacrificed, while the sinful wife was exalted in the estimation of her friends as if a model of virtue."—*Ibid.*, January 8, 1880.

3. THE TESTING OF A CHARACTER

a. What did Joseph's attitude in prison reveal? **Philippians 2:4.**

"[Joseph] was condemned as a criminal to a gloomy prison, yet he did not become morose and look upon the discouraging features of his case. He kept his patience and his hope and faith. He did not close his heart against suffering humanity, he did not turn his attention to himself, but entered into the troubles of his fellow-prisoners, giving them his kindly sympathy. He found work to do, even in the prison. He was indeed a servant of servants. God was fitting him, in the school of affliction, for greater usefulness. He was learning to govern himself. From a position of honor and trust he had been suddenly abased to one of apparent degradation; but integrity, innocence, and virtue can never be degraded. God's will had been his ruling motive in prosperity, and he shows the same high regard for that will now that he is enclosed in prison walls. He carried his religion with him wherever he went, and in whatever situation he was placed."—*The Signs of the Times*, January 8, 1880.

b. While in prison, what type of qualities was God trying to inspire in Joseph? **Genesis 40:1–4; 41:33, 38, 39; Proverbs 1:1–5; 14:35.**

"[Joseph] did not brood upon his own wrongs, but forgot his sorrow in trying to lighten the sorrows of others. He found a work to do, even in the prison. God was preparing him in the school of affliction for greater usefulness, and he did not refuse the needful discipline. In the prison, witnessing the results of oppression and tyranny and the effects of crime, he learned lessons of justice, sympathy, and mercy, that prepared him to exercise power with wisdom and compassion."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 218.

"The formation of a noble character is the work of a lifetime and must be the result of diligent and persevering effort. God gives opportunities; success depends upon the use made of them."—*Ibid.*, p. 223.

"We become overcomers by helping others to overcome. We overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of our testimony. The keeping of the commandments of God will yield in us an obedient spirit, and the service that is the offspring of such a spirit, God can accept. . . . How many in our churches will seek to set such an example as will reflect to mankind the Light of the world?"—*The Review and Herald*, February 25, 1909.

4. ANOTHER STEP IN GOD'S PLAN

- a. Through God's providence, how was Joseph able to minister to Pharaoh's butler and baker? Genesis 40:5–8 (first part). In whom did Joseph place his confidence when offering the interpretation? Verse 8 (last part); James 1:5.
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“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him’ (James 1:5). Such a promise is of more value than gold or silver. If with a humble heart you seek divine guidance in every trouble and perplexity, His word is pledged that a gracious answer will be given you. And His word can never fail.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 427.

- b. What was the dream of the chief butler, and how did Joseph interpret it? Genesis 40:9–13.
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“Then the butler related to Joseph his dream, which he interpreted, that the butler would be restored to the king's favor, and deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand as he had formerly done. The butler was satisfied with the interpretation, and his mind was at once relieved.

“Joseph told the chief butler that in three days he would be no more a prisoner. He felt very grateful to Joseph because of the interest he had manifested for him, and the kind treatment he had received at his hands, and, above all, for helping him when in great distress of mind, by interpreting his dream.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 147.

- c. The baker was excited to find out about his dream, but what was its meaning? Genesis 40:16–19. How accurate were Joseph's interpretations? Verses 20–22.
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“When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good’ (Genesis 40:16), he took courage and made known his dream. As soon as he related his dream, Joseph looked sad. He understood its terrible meaning. Joseph possessed a kind, sympathizing heart, yet his high sense of duty led him to give the truthful, yet sad, interpretation to the chief baker's dream. He told him that the three baskets upon his head meant three days. And that, as in his dream, the birds ate the baked meats out of the upper basket, so they would eat his flesh hung upon a tree.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 147, 148.

5. LEARNING THE LESSONS OF TRUST

- a. After giving the interpretation of the butler's dream, what did Joseph ask of him, and why? Genesis 40:14, 15. How did the butler repay the kindness of Joseph? Verse 23.

"The butler was guilty of the sin of ingratitude. After he had obtained relief from his anxiety, by the cheering interpretation of Joseph, he thought that he should, if brought again into the king's favor, certainly remember the captive Joseph, and speak in his favor to the king. He had seen the interpretation of the dream exactly fulfilled, yet in his prosperity he forgot Joseph in his affliction and confinement. Ingratitude is regarded by the Lord as among the most aggravating sins. And although abhorred by God and man, yet it is of daily occurrence."—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 148.

- b. What important lesson did God desire Joseph to learn while in prison? Jeremiah 17:5; Isaiah 49:14–16. Why? 1 Corinthians 1:31.

"For two years longer Joseph remained a prisoner. The hope that had been kindled in his heart gradually died out, and to all other trials was added the bitter sting of ingratitude."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 219.

"Faith is trusting God—believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good. Thus, instead of our own, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness. Our lives, ourselves, are already His; faith acknowledges His ownership and accepts its blessing. Truth, uprightness, purity, have been pointed out as secrets of life's success. It is faith that puts us in possession of these principles."—*Education*, p. 253.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What means does God use to develop character?
2. Why can we look to Him when facing trials?
3. How should we act when going through trials and difficulties?
4. How do we truly receive wisdom?
5. What should we remember when disappointed by human neglect?

From a Dungeon to a Palace

“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:10).

“From the dungeon Joseph was exalted to be ruler over all the land of Egypt. . . . The same fidelity to God was manifest when he stood in the palace of the Pharaohs as when in a prisoner’s cell. . . . Faithful attention to duty in every station, from the lowliest to the most exalted, had been training every power for its highest service.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 222.

Suggested Reading: *The Signs of the Times*, January 15, 1880.

Sunday

February 22

1. PHARAOH’S DREAM

- a. After letting Joseph wait for two years from the time the butler was released, what dream did God give to Pharaoh? Genesis 41:1–7.

“The king of Egypt had in one night two dreams, apparently pointing to the same event and seeming to foreshadow some great calamity. He could not determine their significance, yet they continued to trouble his mind. The magicians and wise men of his realm could give no interpretation.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 219.

- b. How was God trying to reveal Himself to Pharaoh, as He later did to Nebuchadnezzar? Genesis 41:8; Daniel 2:1–11, 29.

“[Pharaoh] called for the magicians of Egypt and the wise men. The king thought that they would soon help him to understand these dreams, for they had a reputation of solving difficulties. The king related his dream to them but was greatly disappointed to find that with all their magic and boasted wisdom, they could not explain them.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 149.

2. THE INTERPRETATION

- a. How did Pharaoh's predicament remind the butler of Joseph again? Genesis 41:9–13.

“The king’s perplexity and distress increased, and terror spread throughout his palace. The general agitation recalled to the chief butler’s mind the circumstances of his own dream; with it came the memory of Joseph, and a pang of remorse for his forgetfulness and ingratitude. He at once informed the king how his own dream and that of the chief baker had been interpreted by a Hebrew captive, and how the predictions had been fulfilled.

“It was humiliating to Pharaoh to turn away from the magicians and wise men of his kingdom to consult an alien and a slave, but he was ready to accept the lowliest service if his troubled mind might find relief. Joseph was immediately sent for; he put off his prison attire, and shaved himself, for his hair had grown long during the period of his disgrace and confinement. He was then conducted to the presence of the king.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 219, 220.

- b. What should we learn from Joseph's practice of sharing his knowledge of God with others? Genesis 41:14–16; 1 Peter 3:15.

“Joseph’s answer to the king shows his strong faith and humble trust in God. He modestly disclaims all honor of possessing in himself superior wisdom to interpret. He tells the king that his knowledge is not greater than those whom he has consulted. ‘It is not in me’ (Genesis 41:16). God alone can explain these mysteries.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 150.

“Joseph brought God with him into Egypt, and the fact was made apparent by his cheerful demeanor amid his sorrow. . . .

“Joseph’s religion kept his temper sweet and his sympathy with humanity warm and strong, notwithstanding all his trials. There are those who if they feel they are not rightly used, become sour, ungenerous, crabbed and uncourteous in their words and deportment. They sink down discouraged, hateful and hating others. But Joseph was a Christian.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 320.

- c. What prophecy was God revealing to Pharaoh through Joseph's interpretation, and why? Genesis 41:25–32; 2 Peter 1:19.
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3. EXALTED BY GOD

- a. What advice did Joseph give Pharaoh after interpreting the dream, and what can we learn from Joseph's experience? Genesis 41:33–37; James 4:10.
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“The king believed all that Joseph said. He believed that God was with him and was impressed with the fact that he was the most suitable man to be placed in authority at the head of affairs. He did not despise him because he was a Hebrew slave. He saw that he possessed an excellent spirit. ‘And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?’ (Genesis 41:38)—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 151, 152.

“He who receives Christ by living faith has a living connection with God and is a vessel unto honor. He carries with him the atmosphere of heaven, which is the grace of God, a treasure that the world cannot buy.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1097.

- b. How did all the trials and difficulties transform Joseph, and how did Pharaoh acknowledge this? Genesis 41:38–45; Acts 4:13.
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“In all the realm Joseph was the only man gifted with wisdom to point out the danger that threatened the kingdom and the preparation necessary to meet it; and the king was convinced that he was the one best qualified to execute the plans which he had proposed. It was evident that a divine power was with him, and that there were none among the king's officers of state so well qualified to conduct the affairs of the nation at this crisis. The fact that he was a Hebrew and a slave was of little moment when weighed against his evident wisdom and sound judgment. ‘Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?’ (Genesis 41:38) said the king to his counselors. . . .

“Joseph's character bore the test alike of adversity and prosperity. The same fidelity to God was manifest when he stood in the palace of the Pharaohs as when in a prisoner's cell. He was still a stranger in a heathen land, separated from his kindred, the worshipers of God; but he fully believed that the divine hand had directed his steps, and in constant reliance upon God he faithfully discharged the duties of his position. Through Joseph the attention of the king and great men of Egypt was directed to the true God; and though they adhered to their idolatry, they learned to respect the principles revealed in the life and character of the worshiper of Jehovah.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 221, 222.

4. BLESSED BY THE LORD

- a. How many years of trials did Joseph pass through before finding his true freedom again? Genesis 37:2; 41:46. Why did it take so long? Psalms 27:14; 34:8.

“Like the stars in the vast circuit of their appointed path, God’s purposes know no haste and no delay.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 32.

“The Lord permits those He loves to be brought into trial, that they may learn the precious lessons of trust and faith. If trials are received aright, they will prove of the highest value to us in our religious experience. As they lead us to put our trust more firmly in God, we become better acquainted with His character.”—*The Signs of the Times*, March 10, 1881.

“There is an evidence that is open to all—the most highly educated, and the most illiterate—the evidence of experience. God invites us to prove for ourselves the reality of His Word, the truth of His promises. He bids us ‘taste and see that the Lord is good’ (Psalm 34:8). Instead of depending upon the word of another, we are to taste for ourselves. . . . And as we draw near to Jesus, and rejoice in the fullness of His love, our doubt and darkness will disappear in the light of His presence.”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 16.

- b. What shows that Joseph truly believed the dream of Pharaoh to be a prophecy of the future? Genesis 41:46–49; James 2:17–22. How did God bless his faith? Genesis 41:53–57.

“Although Joseph was exalted as a ruler over all the land, yet he did not forget God. He knew that he was a stranger in a strange land, separated from his father and his brethren, which often caused him sadness, but he firmly believed that God’s hand had overruled his course, to place him in an important position. And depending on God continually, he performed all the duties of his office, as ruler over the land of Egypt with faithfulness. ‘And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering, for it was without number’ (Genesis 41:47–49).

“Joseph traveled throughout all the land of Egypt, giving command to build immense store-houses, and using his clear head and excellent judgment to aid in the preparations to secure food, necessary for the long years of famine.—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 152, 153.

5. GOD WILL RAISE US UP

- a. **How can we rise above any trials and difficulties which come our way? Isaiah 40:31; Psalm 11:1.**

“Take the word of Christ as your assurance. Has He not invited you to come unto Him? Never allow yourself to talk in a hopeless, discouraged way. If you do you will lose much. By looking at appearances and complaining when difficulties and pressure come, you give evidence of a sickly, enfeebled faith. Talk and act as if your faith was invincible. The Lord is rich in resources; He owns the world. Look heavenward in faith. Look to Him who has light and power and efficiency.

“There is in genuine faith a buoyancy, a steadfastness of principle, and a fixedness of purpose that neither time nor toil can weaken.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 146, 147.

- b. **Even though some things may look impossible through human eyes, what does Joseph's experience teach us? Compare Genesis 39:20 and Genesis 41:41; Mark 10:27.**

“The Lord chose Joseph, through much affliction to him, to carry a heavy burden in an idolatrous nation. He was to work in the line God had chosen for him, that the knowledge of God might shine forth in the kingdom of Egypt. Joseph did not betray his sacred trust.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 25, 1897.

“The obstacles that are piled by Satan across your path, though apparently as insurmountable as the eternal hills, shall disappear before the demand of faith. ‘Nothing shall be impossible unto you’ (Matthew 17:20).”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 431.

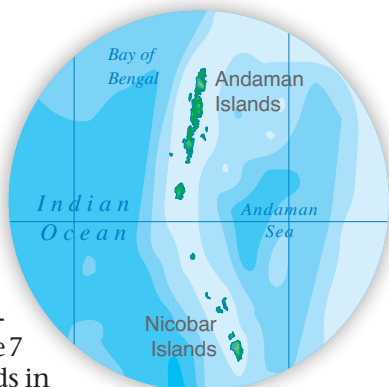
“Man's extremity is God's opportunity.”—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 336.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did God give a heathen Pharaoh a prophetic dream?
2. More than anything else, why does prophecy testify to God's power and existence?
3. In what attitude should we be if we are to be used by God?
4. What experience does God want us all to have?
5. What should we remember the next time we find ourselves in a trial?

First Sabbath Offering for a church in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India

India is a federal constitutional republic governed under a parliamentary system consisting of 29 states and 7 union territories. It is a pluralistic, multilingual, and multi-ethnic society. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are one of the 7 union territories. There are 572 islands in the territory of 7,950 km² (3,070 sq. miles). Of these, about 34 are permanently inhabited.



In the early part of 2009 we learned of the reformation message through the *Sabbath Bible Lessons* received from a member of the church. We also studied further through a church website and expressed our interest to know more about the Reform Movement doctrines. No sooner had we expressed our interest, some brethren from the Reform Movement visited us. Shortly thereafter a group of six people were baptized and, in 2010, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Mission was formed.

As a newly established group we have been worshipping in a private house. We have now acquired a piece of land where we can erect a monument for the Lord. This would cost us about \$ 80,000, of which we have \$ 20,000. Since this is an island territory totally cut off from the Indian mainland, the costs of building materials are generally higher due to escalated air cargo and shipping costs.

The words of the Lord's messenger echo to us today: "The need for a meeting house where there is a newly formed company of believers has been presented before me in a panoramic view. I saw workmen building humble houses of worship. Those newly come to the faith were helping with willing hands, and those who had means were assisting with their means."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 435.

It is our prayerful and earnest request to all our beloved brethren and sisters, friends, and visitors from around the world that you consider and support this project with your kindness and generosity. The Lord, in turn, will surely enrich you with His grace.

May the peace of God be with you and help open your hearts to be a prayerful and giving soul towards this project in this difficult and unreached part of the world.

Your brethren and sisters in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

The First Encounter

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you” (1 Peter 4:12).

“We are standing before God on test and trial to see if we can individually be trusted to be of the number of the family who shall compose the redeemed in heaven.”—*Christian Education*, p. 145.

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 224–227.

Sunday

March 1

1. THE REASON FOR FAMINE

- a. What hidden purpose did God have in allowing the famine to reach Canaan? Genesis 42:1, 2; 46:3. When we can't see God's purpose in our trials, what should we do? Proverbs 3:5, 6; Hebrews 11:6. Why?

“We all desire immediate and direct answers to our prayers, and are tempted to become discouraged when the answer is delayed or comes in an unlooked-for form. But God is too wise and good to answer our prayers always at just the time and in just the manner we desire. He will do more and better for us than to accomplish all our wishes. And because we can trust His wisdom and love, we should not ask Him to concede to our will, but should seek to enter into and accomplish His purpose. Our desires and interests should be lost in His will.

“These experiences that test faith are for our benefit. By them it is made manifest whether our faith is true and sincere, resting on the word of God alone, or whether, depending on circumstances, it is uncertain and changeable. Faith is strengthened by exercise. We must let patience have its perfect work, remembering that there are precious promises in the Scriptures for those who wait upon the Lord.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 219.

- b. Why did Jacob send only ten sons to Egypt; what was he scared of? Genesis 42:3, 4.
-

2. A TEST OF SINCERITY

- a. **What did Joseph immediately think of when he recognized his brothers bowing down to him when they came for food? Genesis 42:5–9; 37:5–8.**

“As Joseph saw his brothers stooping and making obeisance, his dreams came to his mind, and the scenes of the past rose vividly before him. His keen eye, surveying the group, discovered that Benjamin was not among them. Had he also fallen a victim to the treacherous cruelty of those savage men? He determined to learn the truth.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 224, 225.

- b. **Why did his brothers fail to recognize Joseph? Genesis 42:8, 23; 41:42, 43, 45.**

“[Joseph’s] Hebrew name had been exchanged for the one bestowed upon him by the king, and there was little resemblance between the prime minister of Egypt and the stripling whom they had sold to the Ishmaelites.”—*Ibid.*, p. 224.

- c. **Why did Joseph put his brothers in prison for three days, and what would have been on their minds during this time? Genesis 42:9–17.**

“[Joseph] wished to learn if [his brothers] possessed the same haughty spirit they had when he was with them. . . .

“The three days of confinement were days of bitter sorrow with Jacob’s sons. They reflected upon their past wrong course, especially their cruelty to Joseph. They knew if they were convicted of being spies, and they could not bring evidence to clear themselves, they would all have to die, or become slaves. They doubted whether any effort any one of them might make would cause their father to consent to have Benjamin go from him, after the cruel death, as he thought, Joseph had suffered.—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 140–142.

“God . . . brings us into trying positions to see if we will trust in a power out of and above ourselves. Everyone has undiscovered traits of character that must come to light through trial. God allows those who are self-sufficient to be sorely tempted that they may understand their helplessness.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 279.

3. WE REAP WHAT WE SOW

- a. **Who was Joseph truly concerned for, and why? Genesis 42:18–20; 35:16–19.**

“[Joseph] was anxious to draw from [his brothers] some information in regard to his father and Benjamin. . . . His father and Benjamin are the very ones Joseph wishes to learn in regard to.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 140, 141.

- b. **Why did his brothers think this calamity had come upon them? Genesis 42:21, 22. What effect did this conversation have on Joseph? Verses 23, 24 (first part).**

“[Jacob’s sons] sold Joseph as a slave, and they were fearful that God designed to punish them by suffering them to become slaves”—*Ibid.*, p. 142.

“They accused themselves in regard to their treatment of Joseph: ‘We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.’ Reuben, who had formed the plan for delivering him at Dothan, added, ‘Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required’ (Genesis 42:21, 22). Joseph, listening, could not control his emotions, and he went out and wept.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 226.

- c. **When things go wrong in our lives, whom are we tempted to blame? Genesis 42:24–28. Who was actually the real cause of their troubles? Galatians 6:7, 8; Numbers 32:23.**

“Oh, that a right impression might be made upon the minds of young and old in regard to the exceeding sinfulness of sin! Oh, that all might have a just realization of its offensiveness to God, and its injury to mankind! The word of truth declares, ‘Be sure your sin will find you out’ (Numbers 32:23). The real character of every act of your life will be made known. It may be even in this life that through the providence of God, some unexpected circumstance will uncover your secret deeds of evil; but should you succeed in hiding your real character from the eyes of men, there is an inevitable day of exposure reserved for every soul who does not repent of his sins and forsake all evil through the strength of Christ, who has died that we might live.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 27, 1888.

4. THE REVELATION OF CHARACTER

- a. **Why was Simeon left in prison? Genesis 42:24. What was Jacob's reaction when he was told the news? Verses 29–36.**

“On his return [Joseph] commanded that Simeon be bound before them and again committed to prison. In the cruel treatment of their brother, Simeon had been the instigator and chief actor, and it was for this reason that the choice fell upon him.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 226.

“Jacob's affections cling to Benjamin with all the strength of a mother's love. He shows how deeply he has felt the loss of Joseph. But want presses upon Jacob and his children, and their households are calling for food.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 158, 159.

- b. **Explain why the declarations of Reuben and Judah reveal how the brothers' affection for their father and for one another had deepened since their betrayal of Joseph? Genesis 42:37; 43:8, 9.**

“During the years since Joseph had been separated from his brothers, these sons of Jacob had changed in character. Envious, turbulent, deceptive, cruel, and revengeful they had been; but now, when tested by adversity, they were shown to be unselfish, true to one another, devoted to their father, and, themselves middle-aged men, subject to his authority.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 225.

- c. **What tendency do we often manifest in our families when things go wrong? Genesis 43:1–7. Where did this weakness originate? Genesis 3:12, 13; Revelation 12:10.**

“Let every family seek the Lord in earnest prayer for help to do the work of God. Let them overcome the habits of hasty speech and the desire to blame others. Let them study to be kind and courteous in the home, to form habits of thoughtfulness and care.

“What harm is wrought in the family circle by the utterance of impatient words, for the impatient utterance of one leads another to retort in the same spirit and manner. Then come words of retaliation, words of self-justification, and it is by such words that a heavy, galling yoke is manufactured for your neck; for all these bitter words will come back in a baleful harvest to your soul.”—*The Adventist Home*, pp. 438, 439.

5. LEARNING TO TRUST IN GOD'S MERCY

- a. When Jacob felt cornered, into whose hands was he compelled to surrender? Genesis 42:19, 20; 43:8–14; Psalm 33:18–22.

“Jacob feels compelled to permit his son Benjamin to go with his brethren. He also sent a present to the ruler, hoping therewith to obtain his favor. He also directed his sons to take double money, and return the money found in their sacks; for it might have been placed there by mistake. He says to them, ‘Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man’ (Genesis 43:13).

“As his sons were about to leave him to go on their doubtful journey, their aged father arose, and, while standing in their midst, raised his hands to heaven, and entreated the Lord to go with them, and pronounced upon them a gracious benediction. ‘And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved’ (Verse 14).”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 159, 160.

- b. When we are faced with overwhelming circumstances, upon whom can we always rely? Lamentations 3:22, 23; Psalm 103:13–17.

“If we cling to [the Captain of our salvation] by living faith, saying with Jacob, ‘I will not let thee go’ (Genesis 32:26); if we entreat, ‘Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me’ (Psalm 51:11), the promise is to us, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee’ (Hebrews 13:5).”—*Our High Calling*, p. 22.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain how negative circumstances can benefit us in the long run.
2. How much faith can we put in God's prophecies?
3. What should we always remember when tempted to conceal a sin?
4. How does a family crisis often reveal true character?
5. What is mercy, and why do we depend upon it so much?

The Second Encounter

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:12, 13).

“There is greater power in love than was ever found in censure. Love will melt its way through barriers, while censure will close up every avenue of the soul.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 94.

Suggested Reading: *The Signs of the Times*, January 29, 1880.

Sunday

March 8

1. THE FEAR OF RETRIBUTION

- a. As Joseph prepared a banquet for his brothers, what was foremost in their minds? Genesis 43:16–22.

“Upon being conducted to the governor’s palace, the brothers were greatly alarmed, fearing that they were to be called to account for the money found in their sacks. They thought that it might have been intentionally placed there, to furnish occasion for making them slaves. In their distress they consulted with the steward of the house, relating to him the circumstances of their visit to Egypt; and in proof of their innocence informed him that they had brought back the money found in their sacks, also other money to buy food; and they added, ‘We cannot tell who put our money in our sacks’ (Genesis 43:22).”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 228.

- b. How does the servant’s reaction tell that Joseph was indeed a missionary in Egypt? Verse 23; Romans 10:13–15.

“Through Joseph the attention of the king and great men of Egypt was directed to the true God; and though they adhered to their idolatry, they learned to respect the principles revealed in the life and character of the worshiper of Jehovah.”—*Ibid.*, p. 222.

2. A DREAM FULFILLED

- a. **How did Joseph feel when he saw his younger brother for the first time in twenty years? Genesis 43:24–30.**

“When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he could scarcely restrain his brotherly feelings of love. He gave direction to make preparation for his brethren to dine with him. . . .

“When Joseph came home, his brethren gave him the present in the name of their father, and they bowed themselves to him to the earth.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 145, 146.

“Again [Joseph’s] dreams came to his mind, and after saluting his guests he hastened to ask, ‘Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?’ ‘Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive,’ was the answer, as they again made obeisance. Then his eye rested upon Benjamin, and he said, ‘Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me?’ ‘God be gracious unto thee, my son;’ but, overpowered by feelings of tenderness, he could say no more. ‘He entered into his chamber, and wept there’ (Genesis 43:27–30).”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 228.

- b. **What were the brothers of Joseph marvelling among themselves, as they dined with Joseph? Verses 31–33.**

“Joseph placed his brethren at the table, as was customary when their ages were known, commencing with the eldest, according to his birthright, arranging them in order down to the youngest, as though he perfectly knew their ages. His brethren were astonished at this act of Joseph, who they thought could have no knowledge of their ages.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 146, 147.

- c. **Why did Joseph seek to pamper Benjamin in front of his brothers? Verse 34.**

“As [Joseph] sent a portion of food to each of his brethren, he sent Benjamin five times as much as the others. He did this not only to show his particular regard for his brother Benjamin, but to prove them, and see if they regarded Benjamin with the same envious feelings they had him. They thought that Joseph did not understand their language and were free to converse with one another in his presence; therefore Joseph had a good opportunity to learn the true state of their feelings without their knowledge.”—*Ibid.*, p. 147.

3. THE TEST OF LOVE

- a. **Why did Joseph make a point by placing the cup in Benjamin's sack? Genesis 44:1–6.**
-

“Still [Joseph] desired to test [his brothers] further, and before their departure he ordered that his own drinking cup of silver should be concealed in the sack of the youngest.

“Joyfully they set out on their return. Simeon and Benjamin were with them, their animals were laden with grain, and all felt that they had safely escaped the perils that had seemed to surround them. But they had only reached the outskirts of the city when they were overtaken by the governor's steward, who uttered the scathing inquiry, ‘Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?’ (Genesis 44:4).”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 229.

- b. **How did the brothers react when they saw the cup inside Benjamin's sack? Genesis 44:11–13. Why did the servant begin with the eldest brother?**
-

“Kings and rulers had a cup from which they drank, which was considered a sure detective if any poisonous substance was placed in their drink. . . . ‘Then [Jacob's sons] speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. And [Joseph's steward] searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack’ (Genesis 44:11, 12).

“At this discovery all were greatly surprised; and, to express their great distress, they rent their garments, which was the custom when in great affliction. Benjamin was more amazed and confounded than his brethren. They returned into the city sorrowful and afraid. They thought that the hand of God was against them for their past wickedness.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 147, 148.

- c. **Why is it important to select our words carefully, even when we feel confident? Genesis 44:7–10; Matthew 12:36, 37.**
-

“By their own promise, Benjamin was appointed to a life of slavery. And the fears of their father they thought would be fully realized. Mischief had befallen his much-loved Benjamin.”—*Ibid.*, p. 148.

4. THE BROTHERS' LOVE REVEALED

- a. What act of Judah shows that the brothers had fully repented of their treacherous sin committed twenty years before? Genesis 44:14–34; John 15:12, 13.
-

“Judah told his brethren that God had found out their iniquity for selling their brother in Egypt, and was now returning upon them their transgressions, by permitting them to become slaves also.

“Joseph refused to accept them all, according to the word of Judah, as bondmen. . . . Judah spoke with Joseph aside from the rest, and related to him the reluctance of his father to let Benjamin come with them to Egypt, and that he pledged himself to become surety for Benjamin, that if he brought him not to his father, he would bear the blame forever. He eloquently pleaded in behalf of his father, relating his great grief at the loss of Joseph, and that Benjamin was all that was left of the mother which his father loved, and that if Benjamin should be separated from his father, he would die; for his life was bound up in the lad's life. Judah then nobly offered to become a slave instead of his brother; for he could not meet his father without Benjamin.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 148, 149.

- b. After Judah's plea to spare Benjamin and to save his father from grief, what was Joseph compelled to do? Genesis 45:1, 2.
-

“Joseph was satisfied. He had proved his brethren and had seen in them the fruits of true repentance for their sins; and he was so deeply affected that he could no longer conceal his feelings and requested to be left alone with his brethren. He then gave vent to his long-suppressed feelings and wept aloud.”—*Ibid.*, p. 149.

- c. Why were his brothers troubled at Joseph's revelation? Genesis 45:3, 4.
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“[Joseph's] brothers stood motionless, dumb with fear and amazement. The ruler of Egypt their brother Joseph, whom they had envied and would have murdered, and finally sold as a slave! All their ill treatment of him passed before them. They remembered how they had despised his dreams and had labored to prevent their fulfillment. Yet they had acted their part in fulfilling these dreams; and now that they were completely in his power he would, no doubt, avenge the wrong that he had suffered.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 230.

5. FORGIVENESS: A HEALER

- a. How did Joseph show his care for his brothers' feelings and his forgiveness towards them? Genesis 45:5.
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"As Joseph saw the confusion of his brethren, he said to them, 'Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt' (Genesis 45:4). He nobly sought to make this occasion as easy for his brethren as possible. He had no desire to increase their embarrassment by censuring them. He felt that they had suffered enough for their cruelty to him, and he endeavored to comfort them."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 150.

- b. What is the only way any relationship can be healed and restored? Matthew 18:21, 22; Colossians 3:12, 13. What is the biggest stumbling block to restoration? Proverbs 13:10.
-

"It is always humiliating to have one's errors pointed out. None should make the experience more bitter by needless censure. No one was ever reclaimed by reproach; but many have thus been repelled and have been led to steel their hearts against conviction. A tender spirit, a gentle, winning deportment, may save the erring and hide a multitude of sins."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 166.

"If pride and selfishness were laid aside, five minutes would remove most difficulties. Angels have been grieved and God displeased by the hours which have been spent in justifying self."—*Early Writings*, p. 119.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What will happen to those around us if we let our light shine as Joseph did?
2. Explain why Joseph was still wary of trusting his brothers.
3. Why did Joseph order the cup to be placed in Benjamin's sack?
4. How did Joseph know his brothers had changed?
5. What or who is the greatest stumbling block to reconciliation?

The Family Reunion

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

“All experiences and circumstances are God’s workmen whereby good is brought to us. Let us look at the light behind the cloud.”—*My Life Today*, p. 185.

Suggested Reading: *The Signs of the Times*, February 5, 1880.

Sunday

March 15

1. GOD’S LEADING

- a. How did Joseph reveal to his brothers that everything which had happened before came as a result of God’s providence and not by human will? Genesis 45:5–13.

- b. As Christians, what should we always seek and acknowledge? James 4:13–15; Proverbs 16:9; Matthew 26:39.

“Many are still tested. . . . They do not hear the voice of God speaking directly from the heavens, but He calls them by the teachings of His word and the events of His providence. They may be required to abandon a career that promises wealth and honor, to leave congenial and profitable associations, and separate from kindred, to enter upon what appears to be only a path of self-denial, hardship, and sacrifice. God has a work for them to do; but a life of ease and the influence of friends and kindred would hinder the development of the very traits essential for its accomplishment. He calls them away from human influences and aid, and leads them to feel the need of His help, and to depend upon Him alone, that He may reveal Himself to them. Who is ready at the call of Providence to renounce cherished plans and familiar associations? Who will accept new duties and enter untried fields, doing God’s work with firm and willing heart, for Christ’s sake counting his losses gain?”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 126, 127.

2. THE GOOD NEWS

- a. **How sweet are God's ways if we only wait for them? Genesis 45:14, 15. What did Joseph's brethren have to confess?**
-

"[Joseph's brethren] humbly confessed their wrongs which they had committed against Joseph, and entreated his forgiveness, and were greatly rejoiced to find that he was alive; for they had suffered remorse and great distress of mind since their cruelty toward him. And now as they knew that they were not guilty of his blood, their troubled minds were relieved.

"Joseph gladly forgave his brethren, and sent them away abundantly provided with provisions, and carriages, and everything necessary for the removal of their father's family, and their own, to Egypt."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 151.

- b. **What event reveals Joseph's great love for his younger brother? Genesis 45:16–23. Why did Joseph offer a caution as his brothers departed? Verse 24.**
-

"[Joseph] was afraid that [his brothers] might enter into a dispute, and charge upon one another the cause of their guilt in regard to their cruel treatment of himself."—*Ibid.*, pp. 151, 152.

- c. **How did Jacob react to the news that Joseph was still alive, and what grievous sin did the brothers have to confess after all those years? Genesis 45:25–28.**
-

"The sons of Jacob returned to their father with the joyful tidings, 'Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt.' At first the aged man was overwhelmed; he could not believe what he heard; but when he saw the long train of wagons and loaded animals, and when Benjamin was with him once more, he was convinced, and in the fullness of his joy exclaimed, 'It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die' (Genesis 45:26, 28).

"Another act of humiliation remained for the ten brothers. They now confessed to their father the deceit and cruelty that for so many years had embittered his life and theirs. Jacob had not suspected them of so base a sin, but he saw that all had been overruled for good, and he forgave and blessed his erring children."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 231, 232.

3. JACOB REGAINS HIS SON

- a. What should we learn from the way Jacob wanted to be sure of God's blessing before leaving the promised land of Canaan? Genesis 46:1–7.

“[Jacob] commenced his journey with gladness of heart, and when he came to Beersheba he offered grateful sacrifices, and entreated God to bless him, and make known to him if he was pleased with their moving into Egypt. Jacob wanted an evidence from God that he would go with them. [Genesis 46:2–4 quoted.]”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 152.

“We are to come to the Lord with all our burdens, seeking wisdom from above to guide us at every step.”—*The Signs of the Times*, August 15, 1892.

- b. Why did God desire His people to move to Egypt? Genesis 46:3; 12:1, 2; Psalm 105:17, 20–24.

“The promise had been given to Abraham of a posterity numberless as the stars, but as yet the chosen people had increased but slowly. And the land of Canaan now offered no field for the development of such a nation as had been foretold. It was in the possession of powerful heathen tribes, that were not to be dispossessed until ‘the fourth generation’ (Genesis 15:16). If the descendants of Israel were here to become a numerous people, they must either drive out the inhabitants of the land or disperse themselves among them. . . . Egypt, however, offered the conditions necessary to the fulfillment of the divine purpose. A section of country well-watered and fertile was open to them there, affording every advantage for their speedy increase.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 232.

- c. How was Jacob's dying wish granted? Genesis 46:29, 30.

“[To the land of Goshen] came Joseph in his chariot of state, attended by a princely retinue. The splendor of his surroundings and the dignity of his position were alike forgotten; one thought alone filled his mind, one longing thrilled his heart. As he beheld the travelers approaching, the love whose yearnings had for so many long years been repressed, would no longer be controlled. He sprang from his chariot and hastened forward to bid his father welcome.”—*Ibid.*, p. 233.

4. SEEKING NO REVENGE

a. Why did Jacob make Joseph swear to carry his body back to the land of Canaan? Genesis 47:27–31; 17:8.

b. What did Joseph's brothers fear when Jacob died—and why? Genesis 50:14–18.

“After the burial of Jacob fear again filled the hearts of Joseph's brothers. Notwithstanding his kindness toward them, conscious guilt made them distrustful and suspicious. It might be that he had but delayed his revenge, out of regard to their father, and that he would now visit upon them the long-deferred punishment for their crime. They dared not appear before him in person but sent a message: ‘Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin.’ . . . This message affected Joseph to tears, and, encouraged by this, his brothers came and fell down before him, with the words, ‘Behold, we be thy servants.’ Joseph's love for his brothers was deep and unselfish, and he was pained at the thought that they could regard him as cherishing a spirit of revenge toward them. ‘Fear not,’ he said; ‘for am I in the place of God?’ (Genesis 50:16–19).”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 239.

c. Explain why Joseph was not resentful nor revengeful. Genesis 50:19–21; Romans 12:17–21.

“When Joseph's brethren acknowledged their sin before him, he freely forgave them, and showed by his acts of benevolence and love that he harbored no resentful feelings for their former cruel conduct toward him.”—*The Signs of the Times*, February 5, 1880.

“One of the most common sins, and one that is attended with most pernicious results, is the indulgence of an unforgiving spirit. How many will cherish animosity or revenge and then bow before God and ask to be forgiven as they forgive. Surely they can have no true sense of the import of this prayer or they would not dare to take it upon their lips. . . . If, in all their daily intercourse, Christians would carry out the principles of this prayer, what a blessed change would be wrought in the church and in the world! This would be the most convincing testimony that could be given to the reality of Bible religion.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 170, 171.

5. THE PROMISED LAND

- a. What prophetic promise did Joseph give to his loved ones just before he died, and who was called to fulfill that promise? Genesis 50:22–26; Exodus 3:1–10.

“[Exodus 3:2–10 quoted.] The time had fully come when God would have Moses exchange the shepherd’s staff for the rod of God, which he would make powerful in accomplishing signs and wonders, in delivering His people from oppression, and in preserving them when pursued by their enemies”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 188.

- b. Why was this promise so important to Joseph and his descendants? Genesis 17:7, 8; Hebrews 11:13–16.

“God gave to Abraham a view of this immortal inheritance, and with this hope he was content. ‘By faith he sojourned in the Land of Promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God’ (Hebrews 11:9, 10).

“Of the posterity of Abraham it is written, ‘These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth’ (Verse 13). We must dwell as pilgrims and strangers here if we would gain ‘a better country, that is, an heavenly’ (Verse 16). Those who are children of Abraham will be seeking the city which he looked for, ‘whose builder and maker is God.’”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 170.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can believing in God’s providence change our attitude in life?
2. Why is it far better to confess our sins earlier rather than later?
3. List the reasons why God led His people to Egypt.
4. What sin too often destroys the love and peace between siblings?
5. Where was the faith of the patriarchs focused?

A Type of Christ

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

“The life of Joseph illustrates the life of Christ.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 239.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 200–215.

Sunday

March 22

1. BETRAYED BY HIS BRETHREN

- a. How did Jacob's sons betrayal of Joseph compare to Christ's betrayal? Genesis 37:18; John 1:11; Matthew 21:37–39.

“The life of Joseph illustrates the life of Christ. It was envy that moved the brothers of Joseph to sell him as a slave; they hoped to prevent him from becoming greater than themselves. And when he was carried to Egypt, they flattered themselves that they were to be no more troubled with his dreams, that they had removed all possibility of their fulfillment. But their own course was overruled by God to bring about the very event that they designed to hinder. So the Jewish priests and elders were jealous of Christ, fearing that He would attract the attention of the people from them. They put Him to death, to prevent Him from becoming king, but they were thus bringing about this very result.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 239.

- b. In what way was the selling of Joseph likened to Judas selling Christ? Genesis 37:28; Matthew 26:14–16.

“Joseph was sold to his enemies by his own brethren for a small sum of money. The Son of God was sold to His bitterest enemies by one of His own disciples. Jesus was meek and holy. His was a life of unexampled self-denial, goodness, and holiness. He was not guilty of any wrong. Yet false witnesses were hired to testify against Him. He was hated because He had been a faithful reprove of sin and corruption.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1096.

2. WRONGLY ACCUSED

- a. **What happened to the garments of Joseph and Christ? Genesis 37:23, 31; Matthew 27:28, 35.**
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“Joseph’s brethren stripped him of his coat of many colors. The executioners of Jesus cast lots for His seamless coat.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1096.

- b. **How did the actions of those who opposed Joseph and Christ bring about their very own salvation? Genesis 50:20, 21; Acts 2:36–38.**
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“Joseph, by being sold by his brethren into Egypt, became a saviour to his father’s family. Yet this fact did not lessen the guilt of his brethren. The crucifixion of Christ by His enemies made Him the Redeemer of mankind, the Saviour of the fallen race, and ruler over the whole world. But the crime of his enemies was just as heinous as though God’s providential hand had not controlled events for His own glory and the good of man.”—*The Signs of the Times*, February 5, 1880.

- c. **How did Joseph’s attitude in suffering typify Christ’s sufferings? Genesis 39:19, 20; Isaiah 53:6–8.**
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“Joseph walked with God. And when he was imprisoned and suffered because of his innocence, he meekly bore it without murmuring. His self-control, his patience in adversity, and his unwavering fidelity are left on record for the benefit of all who should afterward live on the earth.”—*Ibid.*

“Close to the cross are the blind, bigoted, faithless priests and elders, taunting, mocking, and jeering: ‘Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself’ (Matthew 27:40). . . .

“Not one word did Jesus answer to all this. While the nails were being driven through His hands, and the sweat drops of agony were forced from His pores, from the pale, quivering lips of the innocent Sufferer a prayer of pardoning love was breathed for His murderers: ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’ (Luke 23:34).”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 208, 209.

3. EXALTED TO HONOR

- a. After being freed from prison, Joseph was made second ruler; he was given a new name; and everyone was to bow to him. How does this compare to Christ, after He was freed from the prison of death? Genesis 41:41–45; Hebrews 10:12, 13; 1:3, 4; Philippians 2:9–11.

“When man rebelled, Christ became his surety and substitute. He undertook the combat with the powers of darkness; and when through death He destroyed him that had the power of death, the highest honors were bestowed upon Him. He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and sat down at the right hand of God—the very Jesus who had borne the curse of sin for us. And there was given Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. To Him God has delegated His power; He has the keys of death and the grave.”—*Bible Echo*, January 15, 1889.

- b. What similarities can be found in the life mission of both Joseph and Christ? How did God use each of them to save life? Genesis 45:5–8; John 3:16, 17; 6:53, 63; 5:24.

“The story of a crucified and risen Saviour is the great central theme of the Word of God. In the psalms, in the prophecies, in the gospels, and in the epistles, God has by revelation made prominent the vital truths concerning the agreement between the Father and the Son in providing for the salvation of a lost race.

“Christ was crucified to save the world. For His enemies, for a race in rebellion against God, our Saviour suffered the most excruciating agonies that human flesh could endure. He has made ample provision for sinners, that they need not perish. In the light of His death-agony on the cross, we may know that whosoever will truly repent and receive Him as a personal Saviour will receive everlasting life.”—*The Review and Herald*, September 24, 1908.

“The gospel invitation is to be given to all the world. . . .

“The world is perishing for want of the gospel. There is a famine for the word of God. There are few who preach the word unmixed with human tradition. Though men have the Bible in their hands, they do not receive the blessing that God has placed in it for them. The Lord calls upon His servants to carry His message to the people. The word of everlasting life must be given to those who are perishing in their sins.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 228, 229.

4. THE PROMISED LAND

- a. In what way does the carrying of Joseph's body to Canaan symbolize the hope of the heavenly Canaan? Genesis 50:25; Exodus 13:18, 19; Hebrews 11:22, 39, 40.
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"Through the centuries of toil which followed, the coffin, a reminder of the dying words of Joseph, testified to Israel that they were only sojourners in Egypt, and bade them keep their hopes fixed upon the Land of Promise, for the time of deliverance would surely come."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 240.

"The only hope for the Jewish nation was in their acceptance of Christ, in forsaking their sins, and being reconciled to God. United to Christ, they would indeed become a great nation. He would work for them as He had worked for them in the past. If they were obedient, He would lead them to the heavenly Canaan as He had planted them in the earthly Canaan."—*The Signs of the Times*, July 21, 1898.

- b. What is our hope as we journey through this world? 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; John 14:1–3.
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"We are indeed strangers here, and pilgrims to a better country. Our prospective home is the heavenly Canaan, where we shall drink of the 'pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.' (Revelation 22:1)."—*The Review and Herald*, November 17, 1885.

"I am bidden to say to you that you know not how soon the crisis will come. It is stealing gradually upon us, as a thief. The sun shines in the heavens, passing over its usual round, and the heavens still declare the glory of God; men are pursuing their usual course of eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage; merchants are still engaged in buying and selling; publications are still issuing one upon another; men are jostling one against another, seeking to get the highest place; pleasure lovers are still attending theaters, horse races, gambling halls, and the highest excitement prevails; but probation's hour is fast closing, and every case is about to be eternally decided. There are few who believe with heart and soul that we have a heaven to win and a hell to shun; but these show their faith by their works."—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 413, 414.

5. THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST

- a. What is the only way we can become as faithful to God as Joseph was? Philippians 2:5; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Hebrews 12:2.

“Precious are the privileges accorded him who abides in Christ. . . . The mind of Christ dwells in His faithful followers; their desires are in accordance with His will; their petitions are indited by His Spirit. They obtain answers to their prayers; for they ask for such blessings as He delights to bestow.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 147.

- b. In these last days of prevailing wickedness, what should we desire above everything else? 1 John 3:2, 3; 1 Peter 2:21–23; 5:10.

“When man is in fellowship with God, that unswerving purpose which preserved Joseph and Daniel amidst the corruption of heathen courts will make his a life of unsullied purity. His robes of character will be spotless. In his life the light of Christ will be undimmed. The bright and morning Star will appear shining steadfastly above him in changeless glory.

“Such a life will be an element of strength in the community. It will be a barrier against evil, a safeguard to the tempted, a guiding light to those who, amidst difficulties and discouragements, are seeking the right way.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 136.

“We shall pass through this world but once. Shall we not strive to leave on those with whom we associate the impress of the character of Christ?”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 193.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who are often the worst enemies of the faithful?
2. What should our attitude be when persecuted for the truth’s sake?
3. For what is the world starving today, and how can we help to bring relief?
4. Why are the faithful regarded as pilgrims and strangers in this world?
5. What stands out the most when you consider the life of Joseph?

First Sabbath Offerings



JANUARY 3
for a church in Nigeria
(See p. 4.)

FEBRUARY 7
for the General Conference
Educational Center
(See p. 30.)



MARCH 7
for a church in
the Andaman and Nicobar
Islands, India
(See p. 51.)