

### Reading Schedule for March 18-24, 2019

This is an exciting account of the life of Joseph. The Lord would shape the heart of this young man to become a great leader in Egypt. It is fascinating to see how Joseph responds to each and every situation. It is especially impressive to me that he gives God the credit all along the way.

**March 18 – Genesis 40:** “The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.” (v.23) I wonder how Joseph responded, knowing that he had helped the cupbearer, and yet was so easily forgotten. It seems like he had faith – the kind of faith we learned about during yesterday’s message, Joseph’s faith must have been deep because it couldn’t have been based on his circumstances. He was overlooked and neglected. However, who would Joseph trust in? He doesn’t put his confidence in man, but in God. But we are confident as well and believe that God will remember Joseph. Our Lord never seems in a hurry, but he is never late either. In his perfect timing, he will intervene in your life in just the right way. Do you believe that? What does Joseph teach us about faith?

**March 19 – Genesis 41:** “I cannot do it,” Joseph replied to Pharaoh, “but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.” (v.16) This is what I was referring to yesterday as Joseph gives credit to God. As a young man among his brothers, he might have thought of himself as special, with extra powers. But now he has been humbled, and he sees that his only hope is found in the Lord. He speaks up boldly for God, giving him glory and assuring everyone that the credit goes to God. This acknowledgment of the Lord would not penalize Joseph in any way. It would actually elevate him because he would be someone who listens to God and is empowered by God. People want this kind of person on their side. Pharaoh is no exception. How do you respond to this inspiring and hopeful chapter?

**March 20 – Genesis 42:** “Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, ‘You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected.’” (vv.8 & 9) It may seem that Joseph is angry with his response, since he knows these men are his brothers. Joseph is going to do some probing, and he has to set them up on the defensive. If they believe that their motives are questioned, they are going to tell the truth more readily. Joseph was testing his brothers to make sure they had not been cruel to Benjamin, like they had been to him. It had been 20 years since he last saw his brothers. He could easily be bitter, but he realized the gracious hand of God on his life. This is a fascinating part of the story, and it shows Joseph’s wisdom and restraint. He would wait for the right opportunity to identify himself. But in the meantime, God would use him to challenge his brothers. What stands out to you in this chapter that could be a message for your life?

**March 21 – Genesis 43:** “Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there.” (v.30) Underneath this tough exterior, we get a glimpse of Joseph’s true emotions. He loved his brothers because he had forgiven them, and he especially was drawn to Benjamin. He and Benjamin had the same mother.

I am impressed with the patience that Joseph shows, because he wants to connect with his brothers. But he has to wait for the right opportunity to reveal his identity. Joseph obviously eats separate from his brothers, as a means of maintaining his secrecy, all the time thinking he was an Egyptian. These chapters have been especially fascinating and enjoyable to read. God is using Joseph in his brother’s lives to shape their character. Someone who had been changed in a very drastic way will surface in the next chapter. It is not surprising because this brother will be the ancestor to the Messiah. What stands out to you in this storyline, as the brothers return with Benjamin?

**March 22 – Genesis 44:** “Then Judah went up to him and said: ‘Pardon your servant, my lord, let me speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself.’” (v.18) Judah steps forward. This would be risky. It is impressive that Judah courageously defends himself and his brothers as he pleads for mercy. He even offers himself in Benjamin’s place. This would be the opposite of how they responded with Joseph. When Judah was younger he showed no regard for his brother Joseph. He was essentially willing to make himself a slave, which would be a horrendous situation for him that would most likely last the rest of his life. How do you respond to Judah from this chapter? Why is it so impressive?

**March 23 – Genesis 45:** “And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.” (v.5) Joseph has incredible insight into the ways of God. Originally Joseph’s brothers wanted to get rid of him, but God used their evil actions to fulfil his ultimate plan. This seems so contrary to our natural thinking, but Joseph helps us see this truth in action. God is watching over all and orchestrating each situation to his desired goal. His plans are not dictated by human actions. Joseph said this very clearly in 50:20, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” This is a timeless principle that when remembered will give you great comfort. It reminds me of Romans 8:28. How do you respond to Joseph’s approach to his brothers? How is God speaking to you through this part of the story?

**March 24 – Genesis 46:** “Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time.” (v.29) We love reunions. It had been over 20 years since Joseph had seen his father. It is not surprising that they would express such love and emotion as they are reunited. It would also be better for Jacob’s family to live apart from the Egyptians, which Joseph also knew that this would be best. Calling them shepherds of livestock would assure Joseph’s family that they would not have to deal with the Egyptians. As it clearly says, shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians. This chapter allows us time for reflection as we transition from this week into next week. How has God been speaking to you through Joseph’s story?

**PRAYER: Pray for God’s work in the hearts of so many that are guests and visitors of the church over these last couple of months.**