

*The scepter shall not depart
from Judah, nor the ruler's
staff from between his
feet, until tribute comes to
him; and to him shall be the
obedience of the peoples.*

■ GENESIS 49:10 ESV

Remember
THE PROPHECY
of the Messiah

NOVEMBER 2015

*The scepter shall not
depart from Judah, nor
the ruler's staff from
between his feet, until
tribute comes to him;
and to him shall be the
obedience of the peoples.*

GENESIS 49:10 ESV

COVENANT EFC

2015 Memory Focus

FROM GENESIS (ESV)

JANUARY

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1

FEBRUARY

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God
He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 1:27

MARCH

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Genesis 1:28

APRIL

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 6:5

MAY

“I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Genesis 12:3

JUNE

“Far be it from You to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?”

Genesis 18:25

JULY

He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

Genesis 22:2

AUGUST

“I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that You have shown to Your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.”

Genesis 32:10

SEPTEMBER

And there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed Himself to him when he fled from his brother.

Genesis 35:7

OCTOBER

“He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

Genesis 39:9

NOVEMBER

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

Genesis 49:10

DECEMBER

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

Genesis 50:20

Foreword

BY SENIOR
PASTORS

2015

marks our Jubilee Year as a nation. God is the ultimate reason for Singapore's 50 years of peace and prosperity, safety and security, shalom and success. Indeed God alone deserves all praise, honour and thanksgiving for all the blessings from above!

Jubilee has been called a super-Sabbath. God is looking for devoted disciples who flee from *clamour, hurry and crowds* and cultivate the habit of abiding in God's Word, delighting in God's will and walking in God's way. Those who are intentional about a stronger foundation, a closer walk and a deeper life. Those who are tired of their hit-and-run, hide-and-see, touch-and-go relationship with Him. This Jubilee Year, will you intentionally and zealously commit yourself to be among the first fruits of this new Jubilee generation by scheduling personal time alone with God?

Psalm 1:2-3 speaks of the blessed person as one whose "delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers".

The Psalmist finds great joy in relating to the Word of God...

He meditates upon the Word when day comes and when night falls...

Far beyond outward prosperity, the Psalmist desires the inward prosperity of his soul...

We invite you to take this year to grow deeper in faith and in His Word. Deal decisively with distractions in your life. Cut yourself off from habits and modern gadgets that displace communion with God. Fast from social media. Overhaul your schedule. Remove activities that desensitise you to the gentle promptings of the Spirit.

There is a dailyness in discipleship – soaking daily in His Word, applying His truth, reaping the fruits and passing them on.

Some years ago when Jerry Bridges was in Singapore, he talked about encountering God daily in the Word and especially the Gospel. When asked what it was like, Jerry said, "God always shows up."

What an assurance! This Jubilee Year 2015, draw near to Him. Linger in His presence. Allow Him to refresh you, renew you and restore you – a people prepared for the Day of His Visitation.

Jesus is Our Jubilee!

Ps Tony Yeo and Ps Tan Kay Kiong

God is looking for devoted disciples who flee from *clamour, hurry and crowds* and cultivate the habit of abiding in God's Word, delighting in God's will and walking in God's way.

Guide to Using This Devotional Journal

1 Prepare your heart in God's presence

Select a fixed time (preferably in the morning before you begin your day) and a quiet place where you can be alone and undisturbed.

Observe a moment of silence as you acknowledge God's presence. Centre down.

Begin with a song of worship. Meditate on the lyrics even if you are unfamiliar with the tune. (Refer to the list of worship songs provided.)

Ask God to open your heart to hear Him.

The English Standard Version (ESV) is the default Bible version unless otherwise specified.

2 Allow God to S.O.A.P. you with His Word and Spirit

Scripture – Take your time to meditate on the Scripture passage for the day. Pause and mull over words and phrases that stand out to you.

Observation – Jot down significant insights and reflections from the passage you have read. You can use the guiding questions provided.

What's New in 2015?

A "Deeper Reflection" section has been introduced to aid your contemplation of the Scripture. It is not to replace your own observation, for the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scripture to you as you seek Him earnestly.

Application – Note down a specific and practical commitment to God's Word for you. Is there a command to obey, a sin to avoid, an example to follow or a principle to live out? Where appropriate, share your devotional entry with someone.

Prayer – Bring your heartfelt response to God in prayer.

What's New in 2015?

- Suggested prayers are included twice weekly to serve as an aid to those who may find them helpful in their prayer response.
- On Sundays, you may want to meditate on the Psalms, the Gospel or the Scripture passage of the sermon. This may be followed by reviewing and reflecting on the past week and then responding in prayer. Examining your life is essential in your faith journey as a redeemed disciple of Christ.

Nov/Dec
2015

Worship Songs

AS THE DEER

Chorus

You alone are my strength my shield
To You alone may my spirit yield
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship Thee

Verse 1

As the deer panteth for the water
So my soul longeth after Thee
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship Thee

Verse 2

You're my friend
And You are my brother
Even though You are a King
I love You more than any other
So much more than anything

Verse 3

I want You more than gold or silver
Only You can satisfy
You alone are the real joy giver
And the apple of my eye

Words & Music: Martin Nystrom

Year & Publisher: © 1984 Maranatha Praise, Inc. (Admin. by Maranatha! Music)

CCLI License # 324618

TIMES OF REFRESHING

Times of refreshing
Here in Your presence
No greater blessing
Than being with You

My soul is restored
My mind is renewed
There's no greater joy, Lord
Than being with You

Words & Music: Don Harris | Martin Nystrom

Year & Publisher: © 1993 Integrity's Hosanna! Music (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.)

CCLI License # 324618

BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD (HOUR OF PRAYER)

Verse 1

Before the Throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea
A great high priest whose name is Love
Who ever lives and pleads for me
My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart
I know that while in Heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart

Verse 2

When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin
Because the sinless Saviour died
My sinful soul is counted free
For God the just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Praise the One,
Risen Son of God!

Verse 3

Before Him there the risen Lamb
My perfect spotless righteousness
The great unchangeable I Am
The King of glory and of grace
One in Himself I cannot die
My soul is purchased by His blood
My life is hid with Christ on high
With Christ my Saviour and my God

Words & Music: Charitie Lees Bancroft | William Batchelder Bradbury

© *Words: Public Domain*

Music: Public Domain

For use solely with the SongSelect Terms of Use.

All rights reserved. www.ccli.com

CCLI License # 324618

KNOWING YOU

Verse 1

All I once held dear built my life upon
All this world reveres and wars to own
All I once thought gain I have counted loss
Spent and worthless now compared to this

Chorus

Knowing You Jesus knowing You
There is no greater thing
You're my all, You're the best
You're my joy my righteousness
And I love You, Lord

Verse 2

Now my heart's desire is to know You more
To be found in You and known as Yours
To possess by faith what I could not earn
All surpassing gift of righteousness

Verse 3

O to know the power of Your risen life
And to know You in Your sufferings
To become like You in Your death my Lord
So with You to live and never die

Words & Music: Graham Kendrick

Year & Publisher: © 1993 Make Way Music

CCLI License # 324618

FIND US FAITHFUL

Verse 1

We're pilgrims on the journey
Of the narrow road
And those who've gone before us
Line the way
Cheering on the faithful
Encouraging the weary
Their lives a stirring testament
To God's sustaining grace

Verse 2

Surrounded by so great
A cloud of witnesses
Let us run the race
Not only for the prize
But as those who've gone before us
Let us leave to those behind us
The heritage of faithfulness
Passed on through godly lives

Chorus

Oh may all who come behind us
Find us faithful
May the fire of our devotion
Light their way
May the footprints that we leave
Lead them to believe
And the lives we live
Inspire them to obey (to obey)
(Oh may all who come behind us)
(Find us faithful)

Verse 3

After all our hopes and dreams
Have come and gone
And our children sift through all
We've left behind
May the clues that they discover
And the mem'ries they uncover
Become the light that leads them
To the road we each must find

Ending

Find us faithful
Oh may all who come behind us
Find us faithful

*Words & Music: Jon Mohr
Year & Publisher: © 1987 Birdwing Music
(Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))
Jonathan Mark Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd
(Singapore Branch))
For use solely with the SongSelect Terms of Use.
All rights reserved. www.ccli.com
CCLI License # 324618*

CONSUMING FIRE

Verse 1

There must be more than this
O breath of God come breathe within
There must be more than this
Spirit of God we wait for You
Fill us anew we pray
Fill us anew we pray

Chorus

Consuming fire fan into flame
A passion for Your name
Spirit of God fall in this place
Lord have Your way
Lord have Your way
With us

Bridge

Stir it up in our hearts, Lord
Stir it up in our hearts, Lord
Stir it up in our hearts, Lord
A passion for Your name

*Words & Music: Tim Hughes
Year & Publisher: © 2002 Thankyou Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))
For use solely with the SongSelect Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com
CCLI License # 324618*

COMPLETE

Verse 1

Here I am O God
I bring this sacrifice
My open heart
I offer up my life

I look to You, Lord
Your love that never ends
Restores me again

Chorus

So I lift my eyes to You, Lord
In Your strength
Will I break through, Lord
Touch me now
Let Your love fall down on me
I know Your love dispels all my fears

Through the storm I will hold on Lord
And by faith I will walk on Lord
Then I'll see beyond my Calvary one day
And I will be complete in You

Bridge

I look to You, Lord
Your love that never ends
Restores me again

Ending

I will be complete in
I will be complete in you

Words & Music: Andrew Ulugia

Year & Publisher: © 2001 Integrity's Praise! Music (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.);

Parachute Music (Admin. by SHOUT! Music Publishing)

CCLI License # 324618

WONDERFUL GOD

Verse 1

There is no other God like You
Who made the heavens and the earth
And fills my heart with joy unending
All I can do is give my life
Offer to You a sacrifice
Here is my heart for You unending

Bridge

All of my life, belongs to You alone
With every breath, my song will rise to You

Chorus

You are the joy of every nation
The giver of salvation
Wonderful God
You are God throughout the ages
Enthroned upon our praises
Wonderful God

Verse 2

Every morning when I rise
It is Your presence I desire
To see Your faithfulness unending

Mercy and goodness follow me
For in Your presence I am free
I put my trust in You unending

Words and Music: Denis Campos

Year and Publisher: © 2009 CFN Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))

For use solely with the SongSelect Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com

CCLI License # 324618

FOREVER

Verse 1

Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King,
His love endures forever
For He is good, He is above all things
His love endures forever
Sing praise, sing praise

Verse 2

With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm
His love endures forever
For a life that's been reborn,
His love endures forever

Pre-chorus

Sing praise, sing praise
Sing praise, sing praise

Chorus

Forever God is faithful,
Forever God is strong
Forever God is with us,
Forever and ever

Verse 3

From the rising to the setting sun
His love endures forever
And by the grace of God we will carry on
His love endures forever
Sing praise, sing praise
Sing praise, sing praise

Bridge

His love endures forever
His love endures forever
His love endures forever
Forever

Words & Music: Chris Tomlin

Year & Publisher: © 2001 sixsteps Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))

worshiptogether.com songs (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))

For use solely with the SongSelect Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com

CCLI License # 324618

BEAUTIFUL SAVIOUR

Verse 1

Jesus beautiful Saviour
God of all majesty risen King
(Lamb of God holy and righteous)
(Blessed Redeemer bright morning star)

Pre-Chorus

All the heavens shout Your praise
All creation bows to worship You

Chorus

How wonderful, how beautiful
Name above ev'ry name exalted high
How wonderful how beautiful
Jesus Your name, name above ev'ry name, Jesus

Bridge

I will sing forever
Jesus I love You
Jesus I love You

Ending

Jesus beautiful Saviour
(Repeat)

Words and Music: Henry Seeley

Year and Publisher: © 2006 Planetshakers Ministries Int. Inc. (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing (IMI))

For use solely with the SongSelect Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com

CCLI License # 324618

The Church Beyond

KNOWING GOD'S HEART FOR THE LOST

I was once told of a missionary who had been diagnosed with cancer. She was given only a few months to live and was advised to return home to rest. She, however, felt that God was directing her to spend her days among the nomadic camel tribe. Her decision to obey proved to be a lifesaver and she found her true calling to serve and live as one of the nomads. As a Singaporean accustomed to city life, it was hard for me to visualise myself in her shoes.

But I knew the Lord was calling me to venture out. I sought the counsel of my family members and elders, and with their blessings, I headed for Central Asia. My destination was Arslanbob, a small locality in the south of Kyrgyzstan. I got a one-month job in Arslanbob as a volunteer teaching English to the local tour guides.

I knew the Lord had sent me to a land that has their ears sealed, their eyes shut and their hearts astray. Arslanbob has a population of 13,000, mostly of Uzbek descent, of whom 99 percent are non-Christians. I was told there is only one lady who is known to have converted to Christianity, and is treated as an outcast. There were also stories about missionaries being asked to leave the locality, some with threats to never return.

Arslanbob is a land of great beauty - of high mountains, many rivers and vast forests. Yet I was reminded of Isaiah, "they will see miracles and witness blessings, but have no understanding, nor acknowledge them." And like Isaiah, I asked, "How long more, Lord, will You keep Arslanbob this way?" And His answer was clear, "Till the day when the whole land is gone, and a remnant remains." Like the stump of a tree that has been felled, Arslanbob will grow new branches; the remnants will live to grow again and to bow their knees to the Lord.

Indeed the Lord has blessed the land with so much. There is much to be thankful for, and yet I see many who are listless.

My days in Arslanbob may have come to an end, but my prayers for her will always remain. For it was here that I learnt to live one day at a time, waiting upon the Lord to unfold His day. It was not too long after my arrival that I realised the Lord had other plans for me. I had come as an English teacher, but there was little opportunity to teach English to the guides as they were busy with the many tourists coming in daily. Thankfully my host treated me as one of his family members and I focused on him instead. We talked about almost everything and over time, mutual trust and friendship gave me boldness to share my faith and belief with him.

I also learnt to cry for the people as I immersed myself in the family's everyday activities, performing simple tasks like apple picking, preparing fodder for the cows, helping to pickle vegetables for the winter months to come, clearing the water dug outs, helping to get the fire started and washing the dishes in the icy cold water.

But most of all I learnt to enjoy the quietness and solitude of my room as I reflected on the new things the Lord was showing me about myself, my walk with Him and my relationship with His people.

As I look back I can only remember with fondness the people, and marvel at their hospitality and praise the Lord for His faithfulness.

PRAY

That we may not be limited by our own fears or boundaries in reaching out to the lost

That we may in obedience abide by His calling and serve His people with gladness

That we may cry for the multitudes who do not know him

"And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left..."

JONAH 4:11

November 1
Sunday
2015

■ **Scripture**

■ **Observation**
.....
.....
.....
.....

■ **Application**
.....
.....
.....
.....

■ **Prayer**
.....
.....
.....
.....

The Past Week

REVIEW

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

What gave me life and what drained me?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

How was the Spirit of God at work?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

REFLECT

What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

RESPOND

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

COMMIT IN PRAYER

**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
November 2015 - Week 1**

BEING IN THE PIT

Troubles may come but God will be with us.

Scripture - Genesis 37:12-23; Psalm 121

1. Activity Bite

Flip through the newspaper to look for “bad” news like accidents, theft or natural disasters. Talk about how these events hurt the lives of the people affected.

2. Chat Time

Q1: How would you feel if you were affected by the events?

Q2: Why do you think some people do bad things to harm others?

Q3: What are God’s promises to us in Psalm 121 whenever we face trouble?

3. Learning Point

Being a child of God does not mean that no harm will come upon us. We are living in a world where sin causes people to do bad things. Joseph’s brothers threw him into the pit and later sold him off because of jealousy. He was treated unjustly but later in his life God helped him and he became a very important man in Egypt. When harm comes our way, we will not be alone to face it. God has promised to watch over us and will be with us. We can always trust Him.

4. Action Point

Take time to memorise Psalm 121:1-2 or Psalm 121:7-8. Recite them to one another. These verses will help you in times of trouble.

5. Prayer Power

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, I know that sometimes harm may come our way but I am glad that You will watch over us. Thank You for being with us. Amen.

November 2
Monday
2015

Redemptive Grace Waiting for Us

■ Scripture

Genesis 38:1-11 with Genesis 49:10

■ Observation

What is the significance of the story of Judah beginning at verses 1 to 11 and ending at Genesis 49:10?

.....

.....

.....

Deeper Reflection

Genesis 38 is the beginning of the story of how a “cold and selfish”¹ Judah is being transformed under God’s gracious and mighty hand. Judah’s story will end with his God-given destiny of a future royal line (Ge 49:10). It begins with “Judah left his brothers” “to live among the Canaanites”² (v. 1), and married a Canaanitess (v. 2), going against the patriarchs’ covenant tradition (Ge 24; 28:1-2). Judah’s marriage was filled with overtones of just sex: “Judah saw...he took her and lay with her” (v. 2), and his wife is described only by the repeated verbs “conceived” and “bore” (vv. 3-5) – the result of sex. Judah’s first two sons died prematurely under divine judgment for their wickedness before God (vv. 7, 10). In his levirate marriage³ to Tamar, Onan “has intercourse with her but prevents conception”⁴ (vv. 8-9) – a “sensual and selfish act”,⁵ for which he died. And Judah “sees no connection between the sins and deaths of his sons; instead, he superstitiously blames Tamar”⁶ (v. 11). Perhaps, you see a Judah in yourself. Judah’s story here is incomplete, and God’s redemptive grace is waiting for him. This can also be true for you. Keep returning to the Throne of Grace to find God’s grace and mercy (Heb 4:15-16).

■ Application

In what area(s) of my life do I sense God waiting for me to receive His grace?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

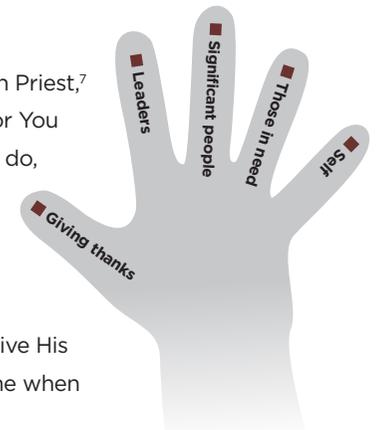
.....

.....

.....

■ Prayer

Jesus, my merciful and faithful High Priest,⁷ You understand my weaknesses, for You faced all of the same temptations I do, yet You did not sin. You are able to deal gently with ignorant and wayward people like me. Thus, through You I come boldly to the throne of my Gracious God to receive His mercy and find His grace to help me when I need it most.⁸ Amen.



¹ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Zondervan, 2001), 514

² Bruce K. Waltke, 506

³ Levirate marriage: According to ancient Near East and biblical laws (Dt 25:5-6), if a brother died childless, a brother of the deceased should marry his wife in order to raise up seed in the name of the brother and so give the deceased social immortality. (Bruce K. Waltke, 510)

⁴ Bruce K. Waltke, 510

⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, 510

⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, 508

⁷ Hebrews 2:17

⁸ Hebrews 4:15-16; 5:2

November 3
Tuesday
2015

Redemptive Grace Waking Us Up

■ Scripture

Genesis 38:12-26

■ Observation

What did Tamar do (vv. 12-23) and what change did it bring upon Judah (vv. 24-26)?

.....

.....

.....

Deeper Reflection

The story of God’s redemptive grace in verses 12 to 26 is told through Judah’s two pledges to Tamar. **Sinful Mess:** Judah’s wife died. When the mourning period ended, “Judah went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah” (v. 12). “Sheep-shearing was a festive time when sexual temptation would be sharpened by the Canaanite cult, which encouraged ritual fornication as fertility magic.”⁹ Seeing that Judah had no intention of keeping his pledge of giving Shelah to her to raise up offspring for Er (vv. 11, 14), Tamar disguised as a temple prostitute to seduce the “promiscuous Judah”¹⁰ into fulfilling Shelah’s role (vv. 13-15). When Judah was not ready to pay her, he gave her “a pledge” (vv. 16-18), for “his sexual appetite [would] not tolerate postponement”.¹¹ **Turning Point:** Judah failed in redeeming his “pledge” from the prostitute (vv. 20-23). When he heard that Tamar was pregnant and accused her of harlotry, Tamar sent him his “pledge” “as factual evidence of [his] crime”¹² (vv. 24-25). **New Beginning:** Judah’s confession “She is more righteous than I am”, acknowledging his fault in not keeping his pledge to Tamar (v. 26), “marks the beginning of his transformation”.¹³ “Where sin increased, grace increased all the more” (Ro 5:23).

■ Application

What does “where sin increased, grace increased all the more” (Ro 5:23) mean to me personally?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

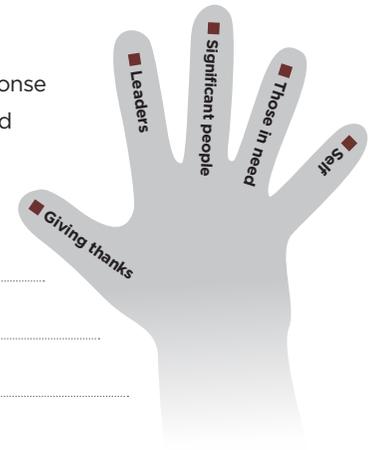
.....

.....

.....

■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

⁹ Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1976), 188
¹⁰ Bruce K. Waltke, 507
¹¹ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary (Word Books, 1994), 367
¹³ Bruce K. Waltke, 507

November 4
Wednesday
2015

Redemptive Grace Working in Us

■ Scripture

Genesis 38:27-30 with Ruth 4:18-22

■ Observation

What is the significance of the connection between verses 27 to 30 and Ruth 4:18-22?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Deeper Reflection

“Judah” means “praise”. “This time I will praise the LORD” was Judah’s mother’s reason for giving him his name (Ge 29:35). How wonderfully meaningful! But for a long time in Judah’s life, his name was anything but meaningful. Genesis 38 first tells us about Judah’s godlessness (vv. 1-23), then covertly God’s grace (vv. 24-30). Twin sons were born out of Judah’s impure sexual relationship with Tamar (vv. 27-30). “The twins were perhaps a gift from God to Tamar to compensate her for the lack of children from her two husbands as well as a sign to Judah, who lost two sons due to their wickedness, that his sins are forgiven and a new day is dawning under God’s favour.”¹⁴ One of the twins was called “Perez” (v. 29). The genealogy in Ruth 4:18-22 shows God’s choice of Perez to be in the line to King David, and ultimately to Jesus the Messiah (Mt 1:1-16), fulfilling Genesis 49:10 – the destiny that God redeemed and transformed Judah to. In Genesis 38:26, Judah began to recover the significance of his name. God is praised again! Redemptive grace relentlessly pursues sinners “to the praise of His glorious grace” (Eph 1:6-7).

■ Application

In what ways is hope in God’s grace true in my life?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

¹⁴ Bruce K. Waltke, 514

November 5
Thursday
2015

God Is There When Things Go Wrong

■ Scripture

Genesis 39:1-6a

■ Observation

What is the significance of “the LORD” being mentioned five times in verses 1 to 6a?

Deeper Reflection

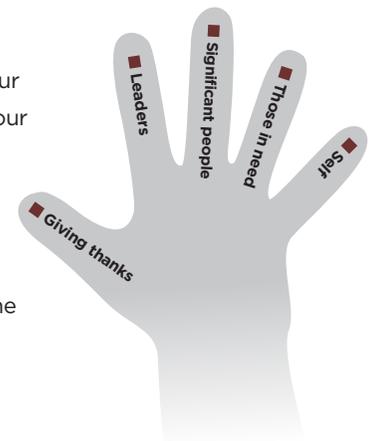
Joseph experienced a triple trauma. His brothers threw him into a pit (Ge 37:23-24). In “the distress of his soul...he pleaded with” his brothers; but in their cold callousness, they “would not listen” to him (Ge 43:21). Then, they brought him out of the pit, only to sell him to the Midianite traders (Ge 37:28), which left him anxiously and helplessly wondering, “What’s going to happen to me?” Next he knew he was a slave of Potiphar (v. 1). But God is there when things go wrong: “The LORD was with Joseph” (vv. 2, 3). This is the theological key to Genesis 39. And “the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand”, so much so that his master saw it so distinctively (vv. 2, 3). And he promoted Joseph to be in charge of “everything he owned” (vv. 4-6). But was God present with Joseph only then? No. God was with him when he was suffering his triple trauma. God was with him from way back when his two dreams started all the trouble until Egypt (Ge 37:5-11). God’s presence with us can be apparent and unapparent. It is not defined by prosperity and promotion. The “favour” Joseph found before Potiphar (v. 4) would soon turn into fury (Ge 39:19).

■ Application

How do I understand God’s presence with me in practical terms?

■ Prayer

O God, I can never escape from Your Spirit! I can never get away from Your presence! If I go up to heaven, You are there; if I go down to the grave, You are there. O Gracious Presence in Christ that lovingly pursues me! If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there Your hand will guide me, and Your strength will support me.¹⁵ Amen.



¹⁵ Psalm 139:7-10 (NLT)

November 6
 Friday
 2015

Things Go Wrong When We Do Right

■ **Scripture**

Genesis 39:6b-20

■ **Observation**

What do you learn about God in verses 6b to 20?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Deeper Reflection

Verses 6b to 20 is about Joseph being falsely accused of attempted rape. Potiphar’s wife “looked with desire” at Joseph and seduced him to make love to her (v. 7). Joseph “refused” (v. 8). But the seduction came “day after day”, and each time Joseph resisted (v. 10). If “the LORD was with Joseph” is the theological key to Genesis 39, the discipleship key is: “How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?” (v. 9). However, things can go wrong when we do right. “Now it happened one day” Joseph was doing his work and “none of the household servants were inside” (v. 11). Coincidence? Such “circumstances provoked the woman’s assault”¹⁶ (v. 12a). Wasn’t God with Joseph? Why didn’t God protect Joseph or prevent the woman’s assault? When Joseph “fled” – an act of obedience to God, “he left his garment in her hand” (v. 12b). “His garment” – the evidence against Joseph – is repeated six times (vv. 12, 13, 15, 16, 18). Coincidence? There was no witness to what occurred. God alone was witness. But He did nothing. Joseph was thrown into prison (vv. 19-20). “Why did this happen?” we would ask, if we were Joseph. What’s the theology? God’s passive presence is always purposeful.

■ **Application**

In what way does God’s revelation of Himself in verses 6b to 20 help me to grow in my discipleship journey?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ **Prayer**

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

.....

.....

.....

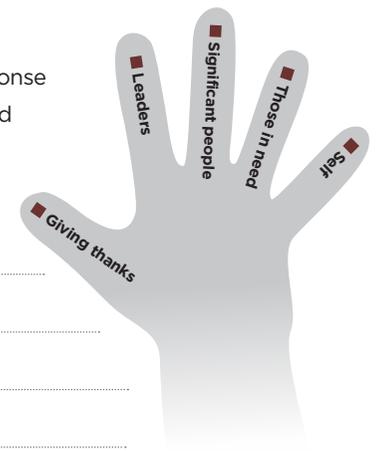
.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



¹⁶ Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 11:27 – 50:26*, The New American Commentary (Broadman & Holman, 2005), 735

November 7
 Saturday
 2015

A Pivotal Event as Defined by God

■ **Scripture**

Genesis 39: 1-6a, 19-23

■ **Observation**

What similarities do you observe in verses 2 to 6a and verses 19 to 23?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Deeper Reflection

In Genesis 39, 14 out of 23 verses are devoted to the humiliation of Joseph (vv. 6b-20), which underscores the event's significance. It was a pivotal event. For it was from here that Joseph would be exalted to his destiny. It is theologically significant that sandwiching this pivotal event is God's presence with Joseph (vv. 2-6a, 21-23). A pivotal event in our lives can be pleasant or unpleasant. Mordecai happened to overhear an assassination plot against the Persian king, which was exposed, and Mordecai's act of loyalty was recorded in "the Book of the Chronicles" (Est 2:21-23). One night, the king "could not sleep" and read "the Book of the Chronicles" and discovered that Mordecai's loyal deed was not rewarded (Est 6:1-3). Then the king honoured Mordecai greatly (Est 6:4-13). A pleasant pivotal event that led to the elimination of Haman, "the enemy of the Jews" (Est 3:10), and the deliverance of the Jews from mass destruction. In contrast, Joseph's pivotal event was unpleasant. Usually, like Joseph, we are unable to see the pivotal significance of an unpleasant event when it happens. Whether a pivotal event in our lives is pleasant or unpleasant, it is determined by the all-loving "only wise God" (Ro 16:27).

■ **Application**

What are some unpleasant events in my life that have pivotal significance?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ **Prayer**

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



November 8
Sunday
2015

■ **Scripture**

■ **Observation**
.....
.....
.....
.....

■ **Application**
.....
.....
.....
.....

■ **Prayer**
.....
.....
.....
.....

The Past Week

REVIEW

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

What gave me life and what drained me?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

How was the Spirit of God at work?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

REFLECT

What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

RESPOND

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

COMMIT IN PRAYER

**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
November 2015 – Week 2**

MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD

You are worth more than any riches of the world.

Scripture - Genesis 37:25-28; 1 Peter 1:18-19

1. Activity Bite

Play a game of guessing the price. Get a few items out like a pencil box, a jacket or a phone, and ask everyone how much they are willing to pay for those items.

2. Chat Time

Q1: Why do different things have different values?

Q2: Can a person’s life be bought at a price? How much would you charge if someone wants to “buy” you?

Q3: What does 1 Peter 1:18-19 say about how much you are worth?

3. Learning Point

Joseph was sold for 20 shekels of silver, which is just a few hundred dollars in today’s world. Do you think he was worth that much? People usually judge another’s worth by who they are, what they can do or how much they have. If they are popular singers, people may think it is worth paying hundreds of dollars just to get the ticket to their concerts. But if you are just another person on the street, others may not want to even speak to you. But God doesn’t see us that way. To Him, we are very precious, more than any amount money can buy. In fact, we are bought by the precious blood of Christ so that our sins will be forgiven. You are worth everything to Jesus.

4. Action Point

Say to one another, “No money can buy you. You are worth everything to Jesus.” Say a prayer of thanksgiving to God.

5. Prayer Power

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You that I am worth more than all the money in the world. You have bought me with Your life and I am very thankful. Amen.

November 9
Monday
2015

Providence: Next Step, Next Door

■ Scripture

Genesis 39:21-23 and 40:1-5

■ Observation

What can you learn about Divine Providence in verses 21 to 23 and Genesis 40:1-5?

Deeper Reflection

The situation in verses 21 to 23, when “the LORD was with Joseph” in prison (vv. 21, 23) – “in a most unfavourable and discouraging place”,¹⁷ it provides the theological backdrop to Genesis 40: God’s providential presence with Joseph. Providence works in manifold ways. But in Genesis 40:1-5, we can observe two. **Next Step:** “Then it came about after these things” (Ge 40:1a) – a progression from Genesis 39. God leads us one step at a time. He does not rush.

And He is never late. **Next Door:** One day, Joseph had two new cellmates: Pharaoh’s chief cupbearer and chief baker (Ge 40:1-3). Under God’s providence, things happening in other people’s lives can be significantly and meaningfully connected to our lives. Joseph “could hardly have suspected what lay before him when these men were put into his care”.¹⁸ Just two more prisoners (Ge 40:4a). But actually, “the introduction of the cupbearer marks the turning point of Joseph’s career”.¹⁹ Joseph did not know yet. The turning point did not happen immediately, but only after “some time” (Ge 40:4b). The significance of what happens next door for Joseph began to take shape when the cupbearer and baker each had a disturbing dream (Ge 40:5).

■ Application

How have the “next step” and “next door” ways of Divine Providence been true in my life?

■ Prayer

Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom, lead Thou me on. The night is dark, and I am far from home, lead Thou me on. Keep Thou my feet. I do not ask to see the distant scene: one step is enough for me.²⁰ Amen.



¹⁷ Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Baker, 1998, 1996), 633

¹⁸ Allen P. Ross, 632

¹⁹ Allen P. Ross, 633

²⁰ John Henry Newman (1801-90)

November 10
Tuesday
2015

A Significant Self-discovery from God

■ Scripture

Genesis 40:6-22

■ Observation

How did Joseph come to discover his gift of interpreting dreams (vv. 6-19)?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Deeper Reflection

Joseph made a significant self-discovery: his gift of interpreting dreams (vv. 8-19). This was the first time Joseph interpreted dreams – and in very specific terms (vv. 12-13, 18-19). We are not told exactly how Joseph discovered his gift. All we know is he recognised that “interpretations [of dreams] belong to God” (v. 8), and what we read subsequently is Joseph interpreted the dreams of the cupbearer and baker (“This is the interpretation”, vv. 12, 18). Unlike Daniel in interpreting King Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams (Da 2:14-19), there is no mention of Joseph seeking God for the interpretations. Joseph appeared to be certain about his interpretations. And his interpretations came true (“just as Joseph had interpreted”, vv. 21-22). We can safely assume from the information that somehow Joseph knew that God had given him this gift, and he depended “on God for this gift.”²¹ Interestingly, it was “in a most unfavourable and discouraging place”²² that God gave Joseph a significant self-discovery. Each of us is a unique person created and redeemed by God for unique purposes to His glory. And in this, God leads us to significant self-discoveries in His way as we walk with Him faithfully.

■ Application

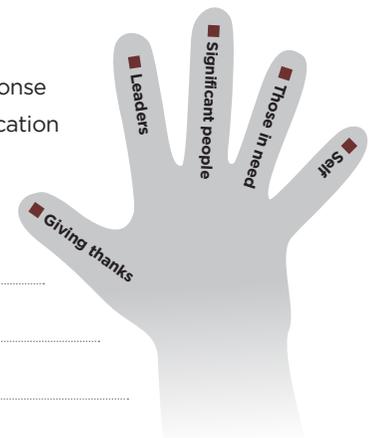
What are some significant self-discoveries that God has led me to recently?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



²¹ Bruce K. Waltke, 524
²² Allen P. Ross, 633

November 11
Wednesday
2015

Each One Has a Gift

■ Scripture

1 Peter 4:10-11

■ Observation

What do verses 10 to 11 teach about spiritual gifts?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Deeper Reflection

Everyone is endowed with “a gift from God” (v. 10) – like Joseph (Ge 40:6-19). Scripture does not give us an exhaustive list of gifts, or concrete definition of particular gifts. For example, at the practical and experiential level, the gift of teaching is expressed in many ways. Peter broadly categorises gifts as speaking gifts and serving gifts (v. 11). Gifts can be task-oriented or people-oriented (like working with children, old folks or AIDS patients). **Employ** your gift “in serving one another” (v. 10). Don’t seek to discover your gift first. Start serving in anything you can do. You will discover your gift as you serve. Gifts are for edification (1 Co 14:12, 26). When people are edified as you serve them, they will testify to you about your gift. We are **expected** to be “good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (v. 10). We are accountable to God for employing what He has endowed on us. God **enables** us in employing our gifts: “If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides” (v. 11, NIV). The goal is **exalting** God: “that in all things God may be glorified” (v. 11).

■ Application

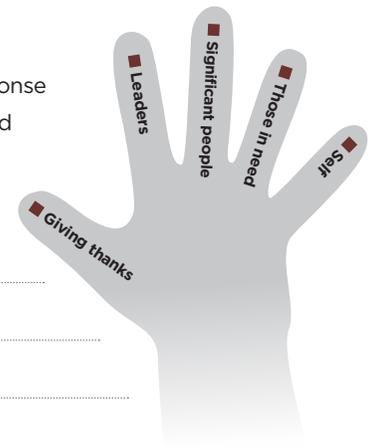
What change(s) do I need to make in serving people with my gift(s)?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



November 12
Thursday
2015

God Is Present, Yet I'm Unhappy

■ Scripture

Genesis 40:9-15

■ Observation

What do you observe about Joseph in verses 14 to 15?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Deeper Reflection

After interpreting the cupbearer's dream favourably, Joseph made this request: "Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house" (v. 14). Joseph further protested, "I shouldn't be here!" (v. 15). The prison "was a most disagreeable place"²³ for Joseph. Understandably so. Despite finding favour before the chief jailer (Ge 39:21-23), Joseph did not have "a gentle reception"²⁴: "They bruised his feet with fetters and placed his neck in an iron collar" (Ps 105:18, NLT). But isn't "the LORD was with Joseph" (Ge 39:21, 23)? Yes, but Joseph was unhappy: "Get me out of here." But isn't it true that "whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper" (Ge 39:23)? Yes, but Joseph was unhappy: "Get me out of here." At this point, Joseph was not thinking that "God works all things together for good" (Ro 8:28). At that moment, he was not able to say "You meant evil against me, but God meant for good" (Ge 50:20). Here we see Joseph's real human struggle. It was not that he had lost faith in God. He was being human, like the Son of God: "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Mt 26:39).

■ Application

How will I deal with my unhappiness in a life situation where I know Divine Providence has placed me?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

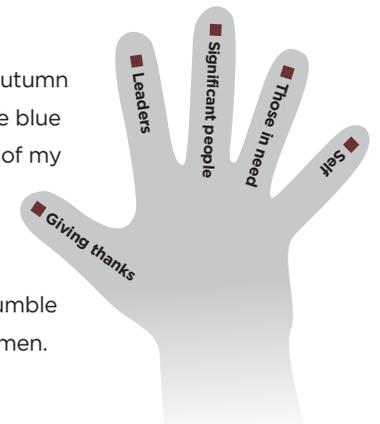
.....

.....

.....

■ Prayer

As the rain hides the stars, as the autumn hides the hills, as the clouds veil the blue of the sky, so the dark happenings of my lot hide the shining of Thy face from me. Yet, if I may hold Thy hand in the darkness, it is enough. Since I know that, though I may stumble in my going, Thou dost not fall.²⁵ Amen.



²³ Allen P. Ross, 633

²⁴ Derek Kidner, 192

²⁵ A Celtic Prayer, *The SPCK Book of Christian Prayer* (SPCK, 1995), 285

November 13
Friday
2015

Providence Puts the Pieces Together

■ Scripture

Genesis 40:1-22

■ Observation

How did God in His providence put the pieces together to work towards accomplishing His purpose for Joseph in verses 1 to 22?

.....
.....
.....

Deeper Reflection

Things started when Pharaoh's two officials "offended" him (v. 1), making him "furious" (v. 2) and he jailed them (v. 3a). **It happened** that they were in "the same place where Joseph was imprisoned" (v. 3b), and Joseph was "put in charge of them" (v. 4). Providence had set the stage for His main agenda (vv. 5-22), marked by two key words: "dream" and "interpretation/interpret" (vv. 5, 8, 12, 16, 18, 22). **It happened** that the cupbearer and baker each had a dream that they could not interpret (v. 5). **It happened** that Joseph observed their sad countenance and discovered their problem (vv. 6-8a). **It happened** that Joseph was there with the God-given gift to interpret their dreams (v. 8b-13, 16-19). "Do not interpretations belong to God?" (v. 8) is the theological centre. It was God who gave the dreams, the interpretations and the fulfillment (vv. 21-22). Perfect timing is a key element in Providence. The cupbearer and baker were in prison "for some time" (v. 4). But the dreams and interpretations **happened** just "three days" before "Pharaoh's birthday" (vv. 12-13, 18-19, 20). Only Joseph's request to the cupbearer (v. 14) was not in God's main agenda. While God does not approve it, He allows it (Ge 40:23).

■ Application

How does the way Divine Providence puts the pieces together in Joseph's story in Genesis 40 encourage me?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



November 14
 Saturday
 2015

Who Did Not Remember Joseph?

■ **Scripture**

Genesis 40:20-23

■ **Observation**

How does the Genesis 40 story conclude (v. 23) and what is its significance in the story?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Deeper Reflection

When Joseph interpreted the cupbearer’s dream favourably, he saw a glimpse of hope of freedom from prison: “Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you...and get me out of this house” (Ge 40:14). Joseph might have thought that this was a divine appointment. It was indeed, but not as Joseph envisaged. Joseph was hoping for deliverance from the dungeon now. But the divine agenda was two years later (Ge 41:1). “Only keep me in mind” becomes “the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him” (v. 23). Don’t miss the double emphasis. Imagine Joseph’s disappointment. At the human level, “this is not a mental lapse but a moral lapse. He self-centeredly does not bother to ‘re-member’ himself with his former inmate”.²⁶ Fallible human beings will disappoint us. But we have to learn to live with such disappointments. At the divine level, it was the God who does not disappoint us (Dt 31:8) that “did not remember...but forgot” Joseph. Joseph was probably asking: “How long more?” “Where is all this going?” “Until the time came to fulfil his dreams [Ge 37:5-9], the LORD tested Joseph’s character” (Ps 105:19, NLT).

■ **Application**

How do I deal with disappointments from people and “from God”?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ **Prayer**

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

²⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, 527

November 15
Sunday
2015

■ **Scripture**

■ **Observation**

.....
.....
.....
.....

■ **Application**

.....
.....
.....
.....

■ **Prayer**

.....
.....
.....
.....

The Past Week

REVIEW

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

What gave me life and what drained me?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

How was the Spirit of God at work?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

REFLECT

*What is one key thing that God said to me this week
in light of what has happened?*

RESPOND

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
November 2015 – Week 3
SERVING IN EXCELLENCE

God is pleased when we serve to the best of our abilities.

Scripture - Genesis 39:1-6; Colossians 3:23

1. Activity Bite

Do you have responsibilities at home (given to you by your parents) apart from completing your schoolwork? List them down and talk about how you go about doing them.

2. Chat Time

Q1: Do you enjoy all the responsibilities given to you? Why?

Q2: In Genesis 39:1-6, why was Potiphar very pleased when Joseph excelled in the responsibilities given to him?

Q3: Referring to Colossians 3:23, why must we fulfil our responsibilities to the best of our abilities?

3. Learning Point

What makes a person work very hard for another person? It could be to gain more money or to become famous. Some may do it for a faster promotion at work or to be the teacher's favourite student. These are done for selfish reasons. Colossians 3:23 tells us how we should serve: Do it wholeheartedly and excellently as if we are serving God instead of man. Our attitude should be God-centred instead of self-centred. All that we do should be pleasing Him first instead of man.

4. Action Point

Look through the list of responsibilities again. For each of them, tell God how you would do it such that you display an excellent attitude.

5. Prayer Power

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

God, thank You for the responsibilities given to me at home. Help me do them excellently, as if I am doing them for You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

November 16
Monday
2015

Conflict between Good and Evil

■ Scripture

Genesis 41:1-7, 17-27

■ Observation

What is the significance of Pharaoh's dream (vv.1-7 and vv. 17-27) in the theme of conflict between good and evil in Genesis (see *Devotional Journal 2015, January 31*)?

.....

.....

.....

Deeper Reflection

Pharaoh's dream in Genesis 41 is one way the theme of conflict between good and evil in Genesis is presented. In Genesis, "good" and "evil" form a pair of key contrasting terms. In Pharaoh's dream, seven "ugly (literally, 'evil') and gaunt" cows ate up "seven good cows" (vv. 2-4, 17-21), and seven "thin ears" ate up seven "plump and good" ears (vv. 5-7, 22-24).²⁷ The seven years of "good" abundance would be consumed by seven years of "evil" famine. The seven years of famine would be "severe in all the earth" (Ge 41:56-57), including "the land of Canaan" (Ge 42:5). We look at this through God's covenant with Abraham (Ge 12:1-3). Famine threatens life and leads to death, which puts God's promise of "descendants" to Abraham in danger; which in turn obstructs the fulfilment of God's redemptive purpose: blessing of the nations. God sent Joseph to Egypt "to preserve many people" (Ge 50:20) – and particularly, Jacob and his family, from which God intends to form "a great nation" (Ge 12:2). "Good" will ultimately triumph over "evil", however great its threat, because God is sovereign and faithful.

■ Application

How do I see God in a world where evil seems to be having its heyday?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

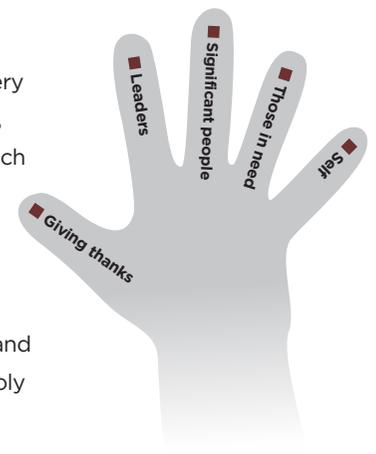
.....

.....

.....

■ Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, who art the very bright Sun of the world, ever rising, never going down: shine, we beseech Thee, upon our spirit, that the night of sin and error being driven away by Thy inward light, we may walk without stumbling, as in the day. Grant this, O Lord, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost forevermore.²⁸ Amen.



²⁷ The Hebrew words for "good" and "evil" (translated as "ugly") are repeated six and seven times respectively in Genesis 41.

²⁸ Primer, 1559 (based on Erasmus, 1467-1536)

November 17
Tuesday
2015

I Don't Know about Tomorrow

■ Scripture

Genesis 41:8-16, 37-45

■ Observation

What can you learn about God and life in the change of events in Joseph's life after two years in prison (vv. 8-16 and vv. 37-45)?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Deeper Reflection

When Joseph heard the good news of Pharaoh restoring the cupbearer to his office according to his favourable interpretation of his dream, he must have been elated with great anticipation of his freedom (Ge 40:12-15, 20-22). But days went by and Joseph heard nothing. Two years has past since his disappointment (Ge 40:23; 41:1). One morning, when Joseph woke up, he said to himself with a deep sigh, "Just another day...like every day these two years." Just then, Pharaoh's officials came to him, unchained him, cleaned him up, changed his clothes and brought him to Pharaoh (v. 14). It was totally unexpected. What happened to Joseph subsequently was well beyond his imagination. There are many things in life we can plan for that we are generally confident of coming to pass, and they do. But when we are in situations beyond our control that we cannot change, we just simply don't know about our tomorrow. It can be the same, worse or better. We ask, "And now, Lord, for what do I wait?" (Ps 39:7a). We can have only one answer: "My hope is in You" (Ps 39:7b). It is Someone, not something, whom we wait for, for a tomorrow that we do not know.

■ Application

How do I live with "I don't know about tomorrow"?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

November 18
 Wednesday
 2015

Is Joseph's Exaltation for Everyone?

■ **Scripture**

Genesis 41:37-45; Romans 8:16-25

■ **Observation**

What does Romans 8:16-25 tell us about "glory" in our life in Christ?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Deeper Reflection

Joseph's turn from humiliation (Ge 39-40) to exaltation (vv. 37-45) was sudden and sharp. Joseph's exaltation was significantly great, as Pharaoh's words show: "according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you" (v. 40), and "without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt" (v. 44). God has promised that He will "exalt" the humble "at the proper time" (1 Pe 5:6). However, how God exalted Joseph is not a divine promise for everyone. The person to be exalted to a particular position of power through particular processes for God's particular purposes is purely God's sovereign prerogative. As God's children, we are "co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share His glory" (Ro 8:16-17, NIV). "Our present sufferings" with Christ in this decaying creation (Ro 8:20-22) "are not worth comparing with the glory to be revealed to us" (Ro 8:18). This promised glory with Christ is eschatological and eternal in nature. So, in "hope" "with perseverance we wait eagerly" for this glory (Ro 8:23-25), whether we will be exalted like Joseph on this earth or not.

■ **Application**

What does it mean to me to be glorified with Christ?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ **Prayer**

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

.....

.....

.....

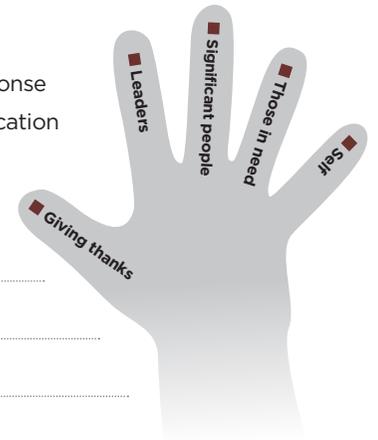
.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



November 19
Thursday
2015

The Powerful and Powerless Paradox

■ Scripture

Genesis 41:8, 15-16, 25-49

■ Observation

How is Pharaoh's powerlessness shown in verses 8, 15-16, 25-49?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Deeper Reflection

Egypt was perhaps the most powerful and most prosperous nation in the days of the covenant patriarchs. In times of famine, people in the lands surrounding Egypt went to Egypt to get food (Ge 12:10; 26:1-2; 41:56-57; 42:1-2). But the story of Pharaoh's dream in Genesis 41 shows how the most powerful became so powerless. Pharaoh's dream "troubled" him (v. 8a). And it is repeated three times that "there was no one who could interpret" his dream (vv. 8b, 15, 24), underscoring Pharaoh's powerlessness and helplessness. But ironically, it was the powerless Joseph, jailed among "the king's prisoners" (Ge 39:20), who alone could interpret his dream (vv. 30-36). And it was Joseph who made a wise suggestion to Pharaoh concerning the coming years of abundance and famine (vv. 33-36). Here lies a paradox: the most powerful becomes powerless, and the powerless becomes more powerful. Behind the paradox is "God" (v. 16). This is the wisdom of God, most gloriously demonstrated in the "foolishness" of the cross (1 Co 1:18, 21-23). In this paradox, we follow the Lamb in overcoming the powerful ruthless beasts of the world (Rev 17:13-14) – in "the foolishness of God" and "the weakness of God" (1 Co 1:25).

■ Application

What does it mean for me personally to live in this world in the "foolishness" and "weakness" of God?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ Prayer

Grant me, O God, to be determined to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.²⁹ The cross demonstrates that the foolish way of God is wiser than the wisest of human ways, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength. You choose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful.³⁰ This is Your glory, O only wise God! Amen.



²⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:2

³⁰ 1 Corinthians 1:25, 27

November 20
Friday
2015

Walking Wisely under Divine Sovereignty

■ Scripture

Genesis 41:25, 28, 32-45

■ Observation

How is divine sovereignty and human responsibility seen in verses 25, 28 and 32 to 45?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Deeper Reflection

Divine sovereignty is central in Genesis 41: “God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is about to do” (vv. 25, 28); “the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about” (v. 32). Yet we also see the part of human responsibility: “Let Pharaoh take action” (vv. 33-36). **When to be active:** “God’s sovereignty lays the foundation for human activity.”³¹ “What is theologically noteworthy is the way in which the strong predestination content of the speech is combined with a strong summons to action. The fact that God has determined the matter, that God hastens to bring it to pass, is precisely the reason for responsible leaders” – and anyone else – “to take measures!”³² **When to be passive:** This is seen in Joseph’s exaltation (vv. 37-45). Throughout, it was Pharaoh who was talking (vv. 38-41, 44). It was what Pharaoh saw in Joseph that led him to exalt Joseph: “there is no one so discerning and wise as you are” (v. 39b) “in whom is the Spirit of God” (v. 38b, NIV). Throughout, Joseph was totally silent and passive. When we walk with God faithfully, we will grow to be “discerning and wise” (cf. Pr 9:10) to know when to be active, when to be passive.

■ Application

How am I doing with regard to walking wisely under God’s sovereignty?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



³¹ Bruce K. Waltke, 536

³² Bruce K. Waltke, 536 – citing Gerhard von Rad

November 21
Saturday
2015

Forget Backward, but Be Fruitful Forward

■ Scripture

Genesis 41:50-52

■ Observation

What do you learn about Joseph in verses 50 to 52?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Deeper Reflection

Two sons were born to Joseph in Egypt (v. 50). He gave them Hebrew, not Egyptian, names. “In spite of his success and status, he did not forsake his heritage.”³³ The names reflect Joseph’s God-centered perspectives in his discipleship journey, tallying “the two sides”³⁴ of his experience. **Forget backward:** “Manasseh” means “to forget”. Its significance for Joseph: “God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household” (v. 51). For Joseph “there were still the mixed feelings that go with the closing of a chapter in life”.³⁵ But God did not want Joseph to forget his father’s household, as his reconciliation and reunion with his family later on shows (Ge 42-50). The test of true forgetting of our painful past is when we remember it with God without feeling any pain. Forgetting our painful past is a redemptive process where God walks with us graciously and patiently. As such, like Joseph, with our “mixed feelings” we still can be **fruitful forward**. “Ephraim” means “to bear fruit”. Its significance for Joseph: “God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction” (v. 52). How do I look at my affliction? What do I look for in my affliction?

■ Application

What area(s) in my life do I need to forget backward and be fruitful forward?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

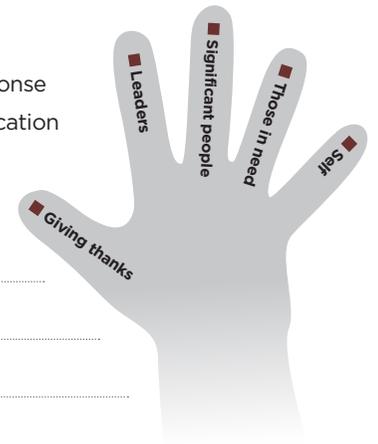
.....

.....

.....

■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

³³ Allen P. Ross, 643
³⁴ Derek Kidner, 198
³⁵ Derek Kidner, 198

November 22
Sunday
2015

■ Scripture

■ Observation

■ Application

■ Prayer

The Past Week

REVIEW

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

November 23
Monday
2015

“But Someday You Will Understand”

■ Scripture

Genesis 42:1-5; 45:25-28

■ Observation

What can you learn about Divine Providence when you compare where Jacob was in verses 1 to 5 with where he would be in the future (Ge 45:25-28)?

Deeper Reflection

Every story in Genesis 37 to 50 must be read in light of its theological centre: Divine Providence. Jacob and his family faced a famine in the Promised Land (vv. 1-5) – so “severe” (Ge 41:57) that he sent his sons to Egypt to buy grain (vv. 1-2). In this crisis, Jacob had only one concern and focus: survival – “we may live and not die” (v. 2b). When we are in a crisis, naturally we get caught up in it. The pressure, pain and perplexity we feel are very real. We are desperate to near despair, especially when we don’t have any solution at hand. But God always has a purpose for our crises. For Jacob, God’s purpose is represented by “Joseph” (vv. 3, 4). Why does the narrator mention “10 brothers of Joseph” (v. 3) and not “10 sons of Jacob”? Why particularly “Joseph’s brother, Benjamin” (v. 4)? Theological significance. These references point to Divine Providence orchestrating events towards Joseph’s reconciliation with his brothers and his reunion with his father in Egypt (Ge 45:25-28). But like Jacob, we can’t see God’s purpose for our crisis now. “You don’t understand now what I am doing, but someday you will” (Jn 13:7, NLT). When we don’t see His hand, trust His heart.

■ Application

In what ways are the words of Jesus, “You don’t understand now what I am doing, but someday you will”, of relevance to me?

■ Prayer

Heavenly Father, who orders all things for our eternal good, graciously enlighten my mind, and give me a firm and abiding trust in Your love and care. Silence my murmurings, quiet my fears and dispel my doubts, that rising above my afflictions and my anxieties, I may rest on You, the Rock of everlasting strength.³⁶ Amen.



³⁶ Adapted from a prayer in New Church Book of Worship, 1876

November 24
Tuesday
2015

“Joseph Remembered the Dreams”

■ Scripture

Genesis 42:6-9

■ Observation

What is the significance of “Joseph remembered the dreams” (v. 8; cf. Ge 37:5-10) in relation to what he was and how he spoke to his brothers in verses 6 to 9?

.....

.....

.....

Deeper Reflection

“Now Joseph was the ruler of the land” (v. 6). Joseph might have thought this was God’s ultimate purpose for him in all his “trouble” and “affliction”, and he would forget the past and move on in his present career (Ge 41:50-52). Not so. **Realising God’s will:** “After about 20 years”³⁷, “Joseph’s brothers came and bowed down to him” (v. 6). When Joseph “recognised his brothers”, he “remembered the dreams which he had about them” (vv. 8-9; cf. Ge 37:5-10). Joseph began to realise that there was something more in his God-given exaltation. It took him some 20 years since his dreams to realise it. “You don’t understand now what I am doing, but someday you will” (Jn 13:7, NLT). **Revolving around God’s will:** When Joseph recognised his brothers, “he made himself unrecognisable”³⁸ and “spoke to them harshly” (v. 7). “Joseph’s motives in using harsh words” and harsh actions “against his brothers are ambiguous and probably complex”³⁹. But, Joseph’s “dream that his entire family would bow down to him probably inspires him to develop a strategy that will bring all of them as a reconciled family to Egypt”⁴⁰. With wisdom and discernment (cf. Ge 41:39), Joseph’s words and actions revolved around his God-given dreams.

■ Application

What challenges do I face in living a life that revolves around God’s will?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



³⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, 542

³⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, 545

³⁹ Bruce K. Waltke, 543

⁴⁰ Bruce K. Waltke, 543

November 25
Wednesday
2015

“Whether There Is Truth in You”

■ Scripture

Genesis 42:8-20

■ Observation

Why did Joseph put his brothers to a test (vv. 8-20)?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Deeper Reflection

As Joseph put the pieces together – his exaltation in Egypt, the famine that drove his brothers to come to Egypt to buy grain, his dreams – he realised that his “task was to get Israel to Egypt”⁴¹. His brothers’ bowing down to him “confirmed the truth of”⁴² his dreams – “but not the fulfillment until the entire family came to Egypt”⁴³. Joseph had the power to accomplish his task, “but not until he was sure” his brothers “were ready”⁴⁴. Only 10 brothers were now bowing down to him. “Where is the eleventh of the dream?”⁴⁵ So, “he accuses the brothers of being spies [vv. 9-12], evidently to worm out of them their admission that they have another brother”⁴⁶, which he succeeded (v. 13). And he “tested” their honesty as they claimed, by demanding: “bring your youngest brother to me” (vv. 14-16, 18-20). Joseph “cannot trust himself to them until he knows that they are trustworthy”⁴⁷. Under Divine Providence, the human test is the divine test for authenticity – “whether there is truth in you” (v. 16) – in what we are, what we do, what we say. “Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves” (2 Co 13:5, NLT).

■ Application

What area(s) in my life concerning authenticity do I need to work on?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

.....

.....

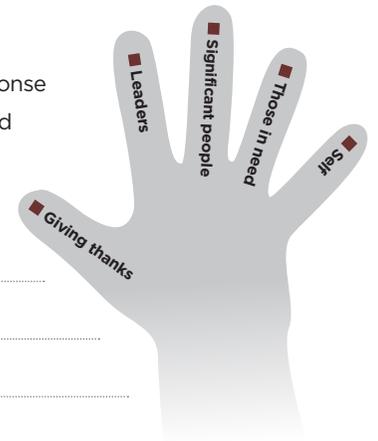
.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



⁴¹ Allen P. Ross, 652
⁴² Allen P. Ross, 652
⁴³ Allen P. Ross, 652
⁴⁴ Allen P. Ross, 652
⁴⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, 545
⁴⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, 542
⁴⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, 543 – citing R. E. Longacre

November 26
Thursday
2015

“Truly We Are Guilty Concerning Our Brother”

■ Scripture

Genesis 42:17-24

■ Observation

What is the significance of what Joseph’s brothers said in prison in verses 21 to 22?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Deeper Reflection

Joseph put his 10 brothers “all together in prison for three days” (v. 17). At the end of it was this confession to one another with resonance: “Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen” (v. 21; cf. Ge 37:23-25a). Their conscience was awakened. Hardened hearts were softened. “A real conversion is taking place from their former hardness of heart to a new sense of guilt.”⁴⁸ God’s gracious redemptive and transforming work was taking place. Quite surprisingly. Surely, Joseph’s brothers did not expect this. And it was after about 20 years. The “riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience...that leads to repentance” (Ro 2:4). But there must be the humble openness and willingness of a heart yielded to God when He confronts us. “Given a taste of their own fate” in prison, “they connect their fate with their sin against Joseph”⁴⁹. God may bring into our lives particular situations, people or relationships, to awaken us to our hidden sins. And don’t give up hope on hearts that are hardened towards God. The Redemptive Wind blows as He wishes (Jn 3:8) - we know not where.

■ Application

How ready am I to respond positively to God’s redemptive confrontation of the sins I am hiding from Him?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ Prayer

O God, my Redeemer, how can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? For the human heart is the most deceitful of all things and desperately wicked.⁵⁰ Cleanse me from my hidden faults by the blood of Jesus. Through the power of Your Spirit, keep Your servant from deliberate sins! Don’t let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin.⁵¹ Amen.



⁴⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, 548

⁴⁹ Bruce K. Waltke, 547

⁵⁰ Jeremiah 17:9

⁵¹ Psalm 19:12-13

November 27
Friday
2015

“What Is This That God Has Done to Us?”

■ Scripture

Genesis 42:25-28

■ Observation

What do Joseph’s brothers’ words, “What is this that God has done to us?” (v. 28), tell us about them (vv. 25-28)?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Deeper Reflection

When Joseph’s brothers left Egypt, he not only “gave orders to fill their bags with grain...to give them provisions for the journey”, but also “to restore every man’s money in his sack” (v. 25). “Joseph’s motives” in returning their money “are not stated”⁵². “Perhaps he wanted to treat them generously, but he could not do it openly and retain his power of knowledge [vv. 8, 23].”⁵³ However, at a stopping place one of the brothers discovered his money returned in his sack, and “their hearts sank” with “trembling” (vv. 27-28a). Keep in mind that Joseph’s brothers were in the process of beginning to change their lives (v. 21). They had just sought to prove to Joseph that they were “honest men” (Ge 42:11, 16, 19, 20; see also Ge 42:31, 33, 34); but now “they appear to be thieves”⁵⁴. They were genuinely innocent. Their immediate response was: “What is this that God has done to us?” (v. 28b). This was the first time Joseph’s brothers mentioned “God”! A transformation! “What is this that God has done to me?” is a question of perplexity over God and His ways that we do ask in our discipleship journey. But we can be “perplexed, but not despairing” (2 Co 4:8).

■ Application

How will I handle my perplexity about God and His ways in my life?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



⁵² Bruce K. Waltke, 548
⁵³ Bruce K. Waltke, 548
⁵⁴ Bruce K. Waltke, 549

November 28
Saturday
2015

“Everything Is Against Me!”

■ Scripture

Genesis 42:29-38

■ Observation

What does Jacob’s words “Everything is against me!” in verse 36 tell us about Jacob?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Deeper Reflection

There are times in our lives when our perspective is like Jacob’s: “Everything is against me!” (v. 36). Everything? Is that true? The Hebrew emphasises “**me**” in Jacob’s response to Simeon being held hostage and “the lord of the land” (v. 30) demanding for Benjamin (vv. 33-34): “You have deprived **me** of my children...Everything is against **me**” (v. 36). Genesis 42 begins and ends with Jacob’s fear of losing Benjamin (vv. 4, 38). Jacob’s life was tightly bound to Benjamin. He would rather hold Benjamin back than retrieve Simeon by sending Benjamin to Egypt. The loss of Benjamin would be the death of him (v. 38). What a contrast to Abraham’s worshipful surrender to God his only son whom he loved (Ge 22:2, 5)! We can be so self-oriented that we blame others for everything that goes wrong, just as Jacob blamed his sons for depriving him of his other children. It is not true that “Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more”. In our self-centeredness, we can live in disillusion and falsehood. There is the fuller and future picture of things which only God can see. The antithesis of “Everything is against me” is “God works all things together for good” (Ro 8:28).

■ Application

How will I deal with my perspective and attitude that “everything is against me”?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



November 29
Sunday
2015

■ **Scripture**

■ **Observation**
.....
.....
.....
.....

■ **Application**
.....
.....
.....
.....

■ **Prayer**
.....
.....
.....
.....

The Past Week

REVIEW

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

What gave me life and what drained me?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

How was the Spirit of God at work?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

REFLECT

*What is one key thing that God said to me this week
in light of what has happened?*

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
November 2015 – Week 5
SHARING THE GOOD THINGS

Sharing good things with those who are in need pleases God.

Scripture - Genesis 41:53-57; Acts 20:35

1. Activity Bite

Look through your toy boxes or study table to see if you have extra toys or stationery that you can give away. Consider sharing these items with those who may not need them.

2. Chat Time

- Q1:** If you can't afford to have much stationery, how would you feel if someone were to share some of his with you?
Q2: Referring to Acts 20:35, how is it that it is more blessed to give than to receive?
Q3: What will it do to our hearts if we keep things to ourselves and not share?

3. Learning Point

Seven years of famine is a long time and Joseph could have kept all the stored grain for the Egyptians instead of selling them to other nations. But he knew that many people would die if they didn't have enough food. Being generous to share the grain was the best thing to do. Most of all, it was because he knew God was the one who blessed Egypt with an abundance of grain during the good years before the famine. So, if he did not share the grain, he would have been going against the command of God to love one another.

4. Action Point

Start packing some extra toys or stationery and give them to some of your friends who do not have much. You can also ask your parents to bring them to organisations that can help distribute them to the poor.

5. Prayer Power

(Ask your children to pray after you.)
 Thank You, Lord, for blessing me with so many things so that I can share some with those in need. Amen.

RESPOND

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

COMMIT IN PRAYER

November 30
Monday
2015

“If I Am Bereaved, I Am Bereaved”

■ Scripture

Genesis 43:1-15

■ Observation

What do Jacob’s words “If I am bereaved, I am bereaved” in verse 14 tell us about Jacob?

.....

.....

.....

Deeper Reflection

We may reach some points in our discipleship journey where we have to say like Jacob does: “If I am bereaved, I am bereaved” (v. 14a) – an equivalent of Esther’s “If I perish, I perish” (Est 4:16).

Forced to surrender. Fearful of losing Benjamin, Jacob adamantly refused to let him be taken to Egypt, which would have saved Simeon and obtained more food (Ge 42:36-38). However, “the famine was severe in the land” (Ge 43:1) and “they had finished eating the grain...brought from Egypt” (v. 2a). “Go back, buy us a little food” (v. 2b). Judah answered Jacob: “No Benjamin, no food” (“You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you”, vv. 3-5). Jacob retorted, “Why did you treat me so badly...?” (v. 6): “It betrays his self-absorption that he still saw the threat to Benjamin primarily in terms of himself.”⁵⁵ Eventually, the self-oriented Jacob had no choice: “If it must be so” (v. 11), then “Take your brother also” (v. 13). Jacob “must lose in order to save”⁵⁶ (cf. Mk 8:35). “If I am bereaved, I am bereaved” can also be expressing preparedness for a **worst-case scenario**. Not fatalism, but faith in “God Almighty” in whom we find His “compassion” (v. 14a).

■ Application

What area(s) in my life do I need to say before God “If I am bereaved, I am bereaved”?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

■ Prayer

My Father, I abandon myself into Your hands. Do with me as You will. Whatever You may do with me, I thank You. Help me to be prepared for anything, to accept everything, provided Your Will is fulfilled in me. I place my life, my all, into Your loving hands, in boundless confidence, because You are my Father.⁵⁷ Amen.



⁵⁵ Derek Kidner, 203

⁵⁶ Derek Kidner, 203

⁵⁷ Adapted from a prayer of Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916)

COVENANT EFC

© 2015 COVENANT EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

Tel (65) 6892 6811 • Email mail@cefc.org.sg • Website www.cefc.org.sg