

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

Lesson 73 – *Don't Quarrel Along The Way*

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Joseph in Egypt

Our spiritual growth lesson begins with a brief review from the life of Joseph while he was in Egypt (Genesis 39-45). More than twenty years had passed since Joseph's jealous brothers sold him as a slave to merchants going to Egypt. Though Joseph was falsely imprisoned and went through many trials in Egypt, his loyalty to God always caused him to be in the right place, at the right time.

Joseph's gift of interpreting dreams caught Pharaoh's attention. Correctly interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, God used Joseph to warn Pharaoh of a severe famine that was to come upon the land of Egypt and surrounding countries. Overwhelmed by the spirit of God in Joseph, Pharaoh realized Joseph's leadership skills to guide them through the crisis, thereby appointing Joseph ruler of all Egypt, second only to Pharaoh himself.

Suffering from the famine, Joseph's brothers, directed by their father, Jacob, traveled from Canaan to Egypt to buy food (Genesis 42:2-3). Of course, they did not recognize that the person in charge of the food distribution was their own brother, Joseph. However, Joseph knew them right away, and after much testing to see if they had changed, finally revealed himself to them.

Overjoyed with the opportunity to reconcile with his brothers, Joseph counseled them *not* to be distressed and angry with themselves for selling him into slavery in Egypt. He wanted them to see how God used his circumstances to bring blessings and to save lives. It was by design that Pharaoh kindly welcomed Joseph's family to Egypt.

Genesis 45:19-21 (NLT) – *Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'Take wagons from the land of Egypt to carry your little children and your wives, and bring your father here. Don't worry about your personal belongings, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.' "* So the sons of Jacob did as they were told. Joseph provided them with

wagons, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he gave them supplies for the journey.

Joseph was ecstatic as he followed Pharaoh's instructions, telling his brothers of the elaborate provisions provided for them to bring Jacob's entire family to Egypt. His family would receive the best of all Egypt to help them in their transition. All of their physical needs were available.

Yet, something else was weighing on Joseph's mind as he watched his brothers prepare to depart for their journey. He said something to them, which was quite telling, as he sent them off.

Genesis 45:24 (NLT) – *So Joseph sent his brothers off, and as they left, he called after them, "Don't quarrel about all this along the way!"*

Don't Quarrel Along the Way!

Joseph had completely forgiven his brothers for what they had done to him in the past. He longed for them to see that God forgave them too, and was pouring out His blessings upon them. This was a time for joyful reunion. This was not a time for the brothers to get into past accusations, to bring it all up again with each other, or who did what to Joseph. As you recall, before Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, he overheard their conversation with each other. (See: Genesis 42:21-22) He overheard them being quarrelsome about such things as who was the first one to mock Joseph about his dreams, or who was the one who stripped him of his fine coat, or who was the one who threw him into the pit. The path forward for Joseph's brothers should be: 1) to forgive themselves, 2) to forgive each other, and 3) to trust God in their new relationship with Joseph (see Isaiah 26:3-4).

Joseph spoke words of wisdom when he called out to his brothers not to quarrel along the way, as they set out on their journey back to Canaan to fetch their father and family. Joseph was spot-on in his concern and this is a great lesson we all must learn brothers and sisters; it takes no effort at all to fall

out with one another – to get into quarreling, *if* that has been the whole pattern of our life. It is like walking around with a chip on our shoulders, just expecting the worst from others. When someone says something we do not like, pushing our buttons, without thinking we respond the way we always do, going off on them. The Word clearly states, this is not an admirable response for a child of God to be making.

Proverbs 20:3 (NIV) – *It is to one's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.*

Fools are quick to quarrel, because that has been their whole pattern of life – their mind-set.

Proverbs 12:16 (NIV) – *Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult.*

The Prudent Overlook an Insult.

It takes determined (resolute) effort to *avoid* quarrels. The prudent (sensible, wise) person has learned to *overlook* an insult by following the principles put forth in the Word of God. When someone pushes our buttons to get us all riled up, agitated and angry, we should take the high road, choosing God's way. Simply remove ourselves, either physically or emotionally from strife.

God's servant, Isaac, did just that. A situation came up where Isaac chose to remove himself physically, rather than quarrel over water rights with his wells.

Genesis 26:12-15 (NIV) – *Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him. The man became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy. He had so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him. So all the wells that his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up, filling them with earth.*

While the Lord constantly blessed Isaac, the Philistines grew more and more quarrelsome. No matter where Isaac moved, the Philistines stopped up the wells. But, Isaac persistently trusted God.

Genesis 26:19-20 (NKJV) – *Also Isaac's servants dug in the valley, and found a well of running water there. But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours." So he called the name of the well Esek, because they quarreled with him.*

Verses 21-22 – *Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that one also. So he called its name Sitnah. And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, because he said, "For now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."*

Because Isaac refused to stay and quarrel, he relinquished one well after another, until finally the Philistines gave up in frustration. The Philistines could not stop God's blessings flowing to Isaac.

The bottom line: In our journey through life, we will have many opportunities to quarrel along the way. To give honor to God, we should avoid strife at all costs, by making the daily journey of life with our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Questions for Personal or Group Study

- 1) Joseph told his brothers not to quarrel along the way back to Canaan. How difficult do you think it was for them to make the journey, without rehashing how they had treated Joseph all those years ago?
- 2) For true reconciliation to take place, what was the path forward for Joseph's brothers to take? Identify the steps. How can these steps help us in our relationships?
- 3) Getting into quarrels is not an admirable response for a child of God to be making. How does a prudent child of God, avoid reacting to insults directed toward them? See: Proverbs 12:16; Proverbs 29:11
- 4) Though it is not easy to overlook an insult (abuse), God's servant, Isaac, showed through his actions, how to do it. Explain. See: Genesis 26:19-22
- 5) Isaac had the freedom to move to another place to avoid quarreling with his enemies. Prisoners do not have that same luxury. How can prisoners remove themselves *emotionally* from potential strife? See: Proverbs 29:11; Proverbs 16:32; Proverbs 14:29; James 1:19; Isaiah 26:3