A Family Reunited



GOD SEES THE END FROM THE BEGINNING AND CAN TURN DIFFICULT EXPERIENCES INTO BLESSINGS.

MEMORY VERSE

"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Word of the Week—Providence:

God's guidance and care for us, and His wise preparation for our future needs. We see God's providence in our lives when we don't know what we need or how our needs will be met. For example: God's providence is having a neighbor share their vegetables when they don't know you have almost run out of food.

This week's lesson is based on Genesis 43-50; *Patriarchs and Prophets,* pp. 227-240; and *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 454-487. **Extra Reading:** *The Bible Story*, vol. 2, pp. 65-72.

SUNDAY

A Hard Choice



The sacks of grain were emptying fast. The terrible famine that had driven the brothers to seek food in Egypt had only gotten worse since their return home. Now with grain dwindling, the brothers knew they could not ignore their bigger problem any longer: they needed to take Benjamin to Egypt to free their brother Simeon from prison.

"Go back, buy us a little food," said Father Jacob (Genesis 43:2). There was no way they could go back without Benjamin, they explained again. Would their father finally agree now that times were desperate?

Judah, the brother who had suggested they sell their little brother so long ago, now put his own life on the line for his whole family. He would take Benjamin and be totally responsible for him. "If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever" (Genesis 43:9). After a difficult conversation, old Father Jacob finally agreed.

Donkeys were loaded with presents for the governor, and sad goodbyes were said. Then with tears in his eyes Jacob prayed for his sons before they departed. "I pray that God All-Powerful will cause the governor to be merciful to you. I pray that he will allow Simeon and Benjamin to come back with you" (Genesis 43:14, ICB).

This beautiful prayer encouraged the brothers as they headed back to Egypt. They really didn't want to face the stern Egyptian governor again. But God was already answering Father Jacob's prayer. God was guiding the brothers, and He was preparing something wonderful for them in Egypt—more wonderful than they could ever dream of.

Sometimes we don't want to do difficult things, but God is with us, and He is wisely preparing for good things to happen when we do.

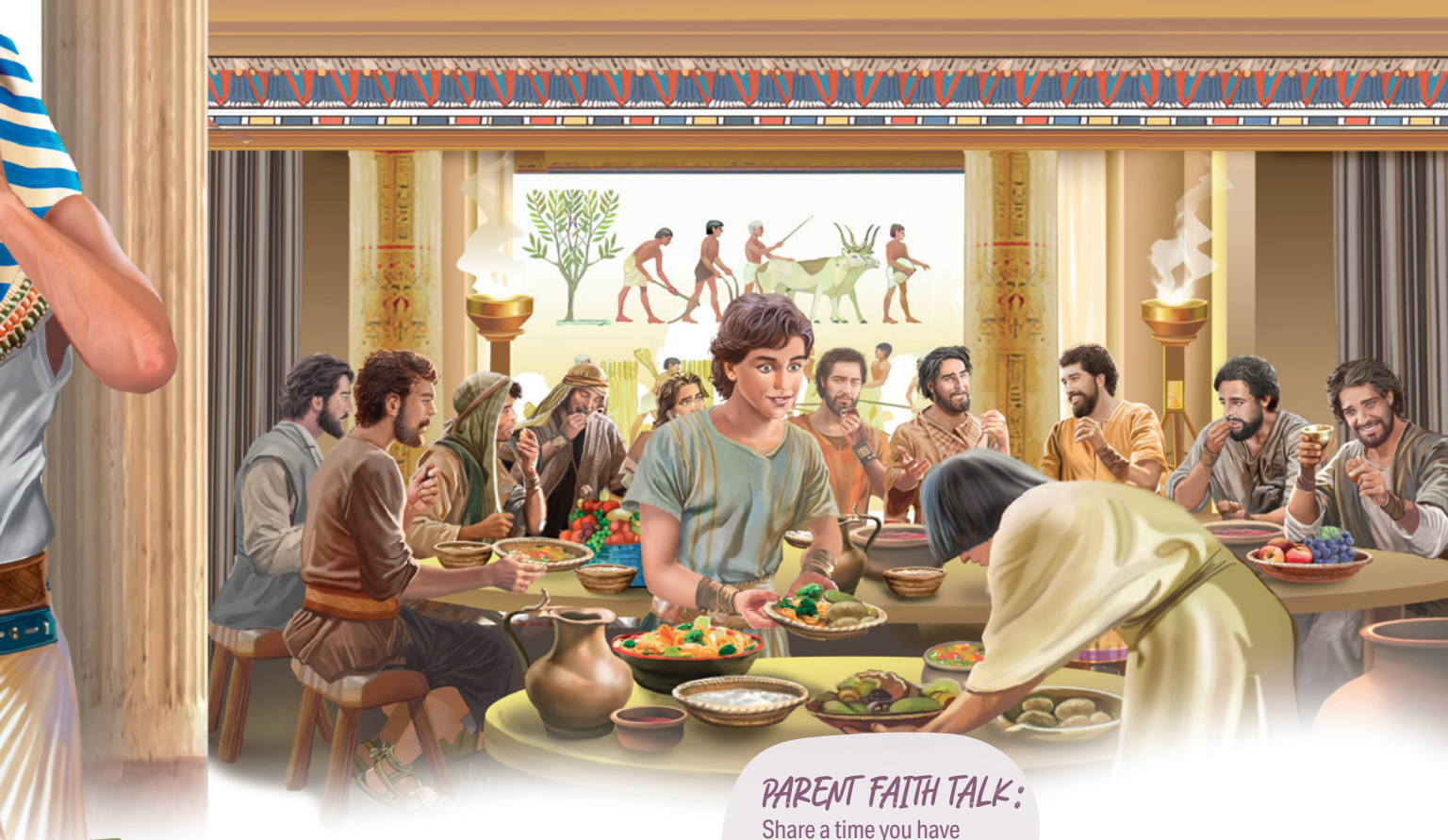
PRAY: Ask God to help you do difficult things when you don't really want to.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *Why do you think Judah acted differently now?*
- *Have you ever had to do something difficult that must be done?*

DO: Read **Philippians 4:19**, your memory verse. Write it out and display it where you will see it each day. Underline the words that encourage you.





PARENT FAITH TALK: Share a time you have seen God's providence in your life.

☐ **MONDAY**

A Surprise Lunch

Joseph's heart skipped a beat. Once again, his brothers stood before him. But now, there was one more. Benjamin was here! Joseph stopped himself from running to his brother and wrapping him in a hug. Turning instead to his steward, his most-trusted assistant, he ordered that the men be brought to his house—for lunch! Then, with a swish of his robe, he was gone. Joseph rushed away to a private place so he could weep. Benjamin, his little brother, was here!

DO: Is there someone at school who would appreciate a nicer lunch than the plain one they usually have? Offer to share with them one day this week. Plan to take extra.

But the brothers stood frozen with fear. They told the steward all about their worries. Why were they scared? **Read Genesis 43:18.**

The steward kindly replied, "Peace be with you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks" (Genesis 43:23). Then he brought out their bother Simeon and led them to Joseph's grand home. Seeing Governor Joseph, the brothers bowed low—as low as they could go! Joseph's eyes opened wide. It was just like the sheaves of grain and the twinkling stars in his dreams. The special dreams from God were coming true! Joseph felt in awe as his brothers slowly stood up. God had put him in Egypt long ago so that he could provide for his family now. This was God's providence.

But had his brothers truly changed? He would test them again. He had his servants give Benjamin five times more food than the others. His plate was piled higher, and higher, and higher! Joseph watched and listened. Would his brothers be jealous and mean?

Not a jealous look or angry word passed their lips. The brothers all ate together with joy. Joseph's smile grew wider and wider.

PRAY: Thank God for His providence and care in your life.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *Why do you think Joseph gave his hungry brothers a big, yummy lunch?*
- *How did God provide for the brothers' needs in this story? Try to also think about more than just their physical needs.*



TUESDAY

One Final Test

Joseph was *almost* convinced that his brothers had truly changed, but he decided to test them one more time. What did he do? **Read Genesis 44:1, 2.**

As the morning sun peeped over the horizon, the well-fed brothers left Egypt with their bulging sacks of grain. They laughed and chatted happily together. What a relief to be taking Benjamin home to their father, safe and well.

But their happiness didn't last long. The sound of pounding hooves suddenly came from behind. In a blur of color, Joseph's steward overtook them and brought them to a sudden stop. Jumping to the ground, he accused them of stealing Joseph's cup. Angrily he asked, "Why have you paid back evil for good? . . . You have done a very wicked thing!" (Genesis 44:4, 5, ICB). He searched the men's sacks and found Joseph's cup. The stunned brothers tore their clothes to show their grief and headed back to Egypt. Their journey was hard, because "worry makes a person feel as if he is carrying a heavy load" (Proverbs 12:25, ICB).

As punishment, Governor Joseph demanded that Benjamin become his slave, while the others were to go free. That's when Judah stepped in. God had worked a beautiful miracle in his heart, turning cruelty into compassion. He begged to take Benjamin's place. That way Benjamin could return home, for how would Father Jacob ever cope with the loss of another favored son?

Clutching their torn robes, the fearful brothers waited for the governor to respond. They didn't know it yet, but God was about to turn this difficult experience into a blessing. Only God knows the end from the beginning, so only He knew things would turn out well.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *How willing would you have been to take Benjamin's place? Why did Judah offer to do that?*

Our all-knowing God sees the end from the beginning. We can trust Him to turn our worries and difficult situations into blessings.

Do: Dress up as you imagine Judah would have looked. Pretend you are Judah as you read his beautiful speech in **Genesis 44:18-34** to your family. Discuss how selfless Judah had become. (Note: You may choose to practice this now and present it for Sabbath evening worship.)

Mission Challenge: Give the friend you invited to Sabbath School something to keep learning about Jesus.

Pray: Thank God that He can turn your worries into blessings.

WEDNESDAY

My Brothers!

After Judah's beautiful speech, Joseph couldn't hide the truth from his brothers any longer. He knew without a doubt that they were truly sorry for treating him cruelly, and that God had changed their hard hearts. He wept and told his brothers, "I am Joseph; does my father still live?" (Genesis 45:3).

The brothers froze in amazement! Could *this* man, the great governor of Egypt, be their little brother? Then terror crossed their faces. *This* was the brother they had thrown into a pit. *This* was the brother they had sold to the traders.

In a flash Joseph realized how they felt, and he said, "Come close to me . . . I am your brother Joseph. You sold me as a slave to go to Egypt. Now don't be worried. Don't be angry with yourselves because you sold me here. God sent me here ahead of you to save people's lives. No food has grown on the land for two years now. And there will be five more years without planting or harvest. So God sent me here ahead of you. This was to make sure you have some descendants left on earth. And it was to keep you alive in an amazing way. So it was not you who sent me here, but God" (Genesis 45:4-8, ICB).

The brothers could hardly believe their ears. Joseph was forgiving them! Not only that, he was telling them how wonderful God was to overturn their cruelty and use him to save them from the famine.

What a beautiful picture of God's providence. God had turned Joseph's difficult experiences into blessings and given him a heart to see and accept God's leading in his life.

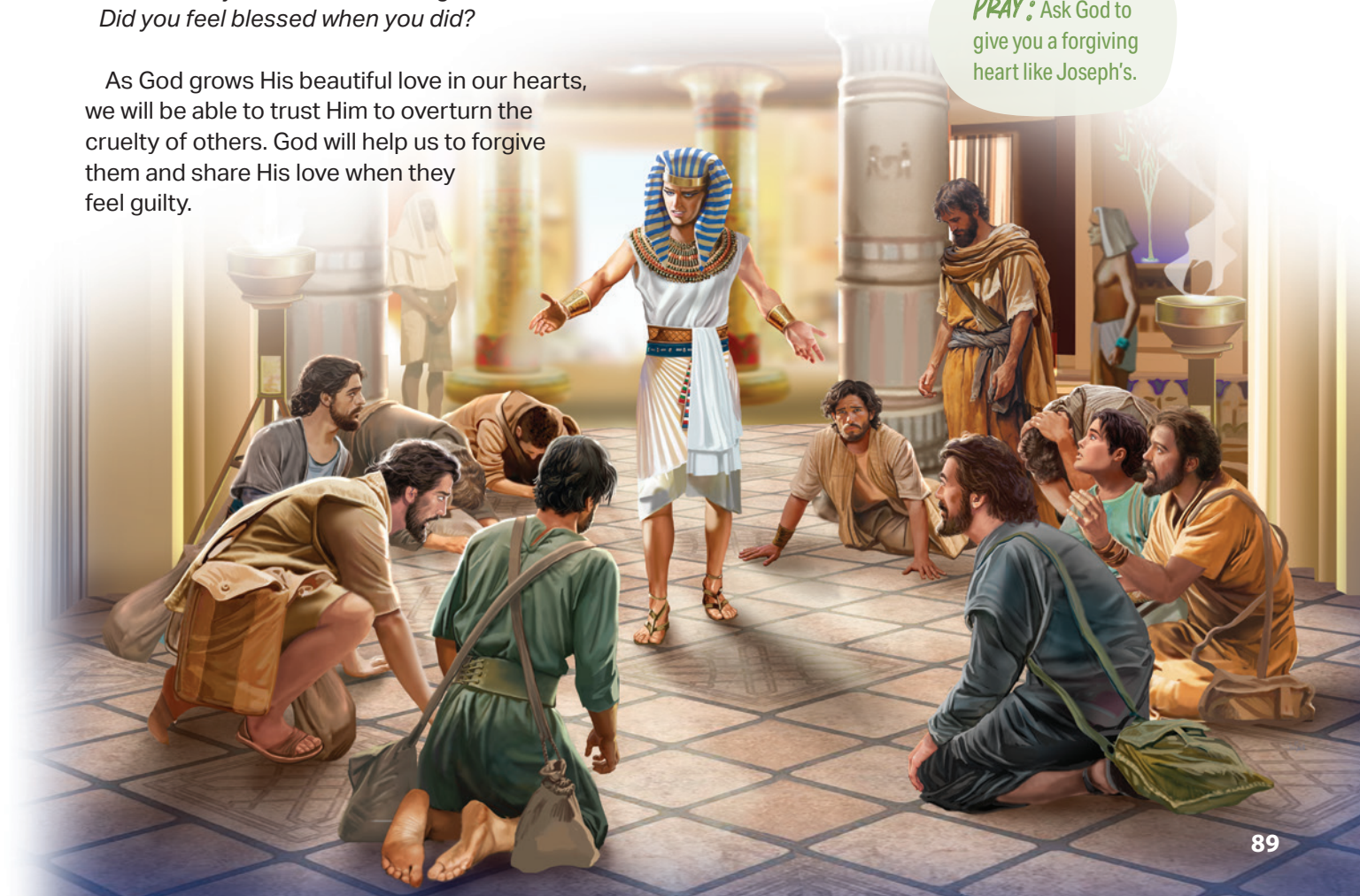
DO: On a piece of paper, write how someone has hurt you. Ask an adult to help you burn the paper, then blow the ashes away. Think about how this is like God's forgiveness.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *Who else forgave people who were very cruel to him? Read* ***Luke 23:33, 34.***
- *When have you been able to forgive someone? Did you feel blessed when you did?*

PRAY: Ask God to give you a forgiving heart like Joseph's.

As God grows His beautiful love in our hearts, we will be able to trust Him to overturn the cruelty of others. God will help us to forgive them and share His love when they feel guilty.



THURSDAY

Exciting News

Fast Fact: Beersheba was the place on the southern border of Canaan where Abraham and Isaac had made altars to worship God in the past. It was considered a sacred place, so it was natural for Jacob to stop and worship there on his journey.

The brothers stared at Joseph with wide eyes. Joseph—the little brother they had sold—was forgiving them! With tears in his eyes, Joseph held out his hand toward them. He still had *more* good news to give. Read about it in **Genesis 45:9-12.**

Joseph ran to Benjamin and held him close. Then he hugged each brother. The brothers confessed their sin and said sorry. Their long years of guilt and regret were over. Their faces lit up with joy!

Pharaoh met the brothers and told them to take wagons and food for the trip home. Even the king was excited to see Joseph's family together again. Joseph gave them beautiful clothes, as well as gifts for his father. Then he sent them quickly on their way. The sooner they left, the sooner he could see his father again.

The brothers sped home with the exciting news. At first old Father Jacob couldn't believe what he heard; his precious son Joseph—*alive*? Then he saw the long train of wagons and the loaded animals. Convinced, he exclaimed, "It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die" (Genesis 45:28).

Before leaving for Egypt, the brothers confessed everything to Father Jacob. He forgave and blessed his sorry sons, for he could see that good had overruled their sin. Once again the weight of guilt was lifted from them.

Then the huge wagon train set out for Egypt. What two beautiful things happened on the way? **Read Genesis 46:1-4.**

What a blessing it was to praise God for His providence and to have total faith that God would guide and protect. Jacob and his family could face the future with courage in their hearts and promises to claim.

We can praise our awesome God when we see His blessings, and while we are still waiting to see them. We can confidently trust our future to Him, knowing that He will supply all our needs.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *What's a blessing from God that you would like to thank and praise Him for?*
- *Recite or sing your memory verse and reflect on how it has been fulfilled in the lives of Joseph's family. When could you claim this promise?*

Pray: Praise God for His providence in your life. And thank Him that His providence will be a blessing in your future.





☐ FRIDAY

Family Reunion

As the wagon train rolled into Egypt Joseph sprang from his chariot and raced to meet his precious father. He threw his arms around Jacob's neck and wept for a long time. Smiling through happy tears, Jacob in his old age said, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you *are* still alive" (Genesis 46:30).

Jacob was so happy to see Joseph and his heart so peaceful that he felt like his life was complete. But Jacob didn't die right away. God gave him another 17 peaceful years with his long-lost son and his reunited children. He watched his whole family thrive in Egypt, and he believed God's promise was being fulfilled; "I am God almighty . . . a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you" (Genesis 35:11).

God had used Joseph's life, with all its ups and downs, to keep the promise alive. Through His providence, thousands were kept from starvation, and a whole nation learned that the God of heaven is real and can be trusted. In the dark times Joseph couldn't see the happy ending to his story. But he had trusted God through it all, and the difficulties had turned to blessings.

Like Joseph, you may have difficult times and not be able to see a happy ending to your story. But trust Him, and He will supply your needs. Always remember: "And my God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *How could the story have ended for Jacob's family if Joseph hadn't trusted God?*

Friday Night

Share and Praise

Think of, and discuss, a time something difficult turned into something good for your family. Work together to match the difficult times in Joseph's life with the blessings. Then sing "Showers of Blessings" (*The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 195).

- Thrown into a pit
- Learned the Egyptian language and culture
- Sold to the traders
- Kept many people alive
- Reunited with family
- Potiphar's slave
- Learned patience and interpreted dreams
- In prison
- Saved from being killed by brothers
- Governor of Egypt
- Went to Egypt and showed the people what God is like

Family Journal

- One great new thought I have discovered in this lesson is . . .
- If you could put yourself in the story, who would you choose to be? Why?

Pray

Read **Psalm 92:1**. Pray around a family circle, thanking God for something that stands out to you in the Joseph story.



SABBATH SPECIAL

Lost at Sea!

The day seemed calm and full of promise as the trio set out in the sailboat from the small town of Fairhaven on the shores of Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts (United States of America). Ellen Harmon, her sister Sarah, and their friend, Mr. Gurney, were excited to visit a family on nearby West Island.

However, once out in the Atlantic Ocean, their mood shifted as the sky began to quickly change. A fierce storm set in: howling winds, lightning and thunder, and heavy rain. Time seemed to disappear as they tried to frantically stay afloat. Frightened, they realized that night was falling. Would they sink in these wild waves? It was impossible to control the sailboat in such a storm!

Holding on tightly, Ellen knelt and cried to God to deliver them while the waves crashed over the side, drenching them all. And right in the middle of the storm, God gave Ellen a vision. She was shown that they would be kept safe and that God would dry up every drop in the ocean before He would let them drown, because Ellen's work for God had only just begun.

Great peace and joy replaced the fear of those on board the little sailboat. They sang and praised God together as the lightening flashed around them.

Meanwhile, Mr. Gurney was finding it very difficult to control the boat. He threw the anchor over, but it just dragged in the water while the boat kept tossing on the waves, driven by the wind. They had no idea where they were, for it was so dark they could not see from one end of the boat to the other. Then at last the anchor gripped the bottom of the ocean, showing they were near land.

"Help! Help!" Mr. Gurney shouted over and over, hoping someone in one of the two homes on the island would hear him over the storm. Everyone was asleep except a little girl. In God's providence she heard the faint cries for help and woke her father!

The man rowed out to sea in the blackness, heading toward the cries for help. The sailboat was soon found, and those on board were rescued. How glad they were to be rowed to shore in the kind man's little boat.

The grateful passengers spent most of the night thanking and praising God for His wonderful goodness and providence.

This story is adapted from *Early Writings* by Ellen G. White, copyright (c) 1882 Review and Herald® Publishing Association. Used and adapted by permission.

For You, Parents: "There is One to whom you can go for counsel, whose wisdom is infinite. He has invited you to come to Him, for He will supply your need" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 72).