

Who is Joseph in the OT ? and how does he prefigure Jesus and St. Joseph in the NT?

Sixth Lesson from Genesis 36-42

Dreams: Dreams are stories and images that our minds create while we sleep. We all dream but we don't always remember the dreams next day. They can be entertaining, fun, romantic, disturbing, frightening, and sometimes bizarre. Dreams continue to be an area of investigation and interest. It is said that everyone dreams between 3 and 6 times per night, each dream lasting between 5 to 20 minutes. Around 95 percent of dreams are forgotten by the time a person gets out of bed. Studies show that blind people dream more with other sensory components compared with sighted people.

God spoke to people sometimes in dreams. Examples are Joseph of OT (Gen 37:5–10); Joseph of NT and Magi (Matt 2:12–22); Solomon (1 Kgs 3:5–15); and several others (Dn I 2:1; 7:1) Pilate's wife in Mt 27:19. There is also a prophecy of the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28), quoted by the apostle Peter in Acts 2:17, that mentions God using dreams. So God can speak through dreams, if He chooses to. In Scripture, whenever anyone experienced a dream from God, God always made the meaning of the dream clear, whether directly to the person, through an angel, or through another messenger (Genesis 40:5–11; Daniel 2:45; 4:19). When God speaks to us, He makes sure His message is clearly understood. Some, like Jacob's dream of the ladder reaching into heaven, were more or less literal. Others, like the young Joseph's sheaves of wheat, required more interpretation.

Joseph's dreams of authority over his family (Gen 37:5–11): Joseph was the son of Jacob and Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel. He was his father's favorite son, as well, and spoiled above his older brothers. Joseph had two dreams that served to solidify his brothers' dislike of him. The first dream was that he and his brothers were binding sheaves of wheat in the field, but when his sheaf stood upright, his brothers' sheaves bowed down to it. In another dream, the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed down to Joseph. His brothers and father quickly interpreted the dreams to mean they would one day be under Joseph's authority. His brothers became even more jealous of him, but his father, after initially rebuking Joseph, contemplated the possibility quietly. Years later, after Joseph's brothers had sold him to slavers and Joseph had gone from slave to prisoner to Pharaoh's second in command, the dreams came true. Joseph's brothers and father were truly under Joseph's authority as they came to him to buy grain during a horrible famine (Gen 45).

The dreams of the cupbearer and the baker (Gen 40): Between Joseph's dreams of future glory and his promotion, he spent some time in an Egyptian prison with Pharaoh's chief cupbearer and baker. The cupbearer dreamed he found three laden branches of a grapevine and squeezed the grapes into Pharaoh's cup. The baker dreamed he had three baskets on his head filled with cakes, but birds were eating from the top basket. Joseph rightly interpreted the dreams to mean that in three days the cupbearer would be released and returned to his position, but the baker would be executed.

Pharaoh's dreams of feast and famine (Gen 41:1–36): Two years after Joseph interpreted the cupbearer's dream, he was called to do the same for the ruler of Egypt. Pharaoh had dreamed of seven ugly, thin cows eating seven plump, healthy cows. He then dreamed of seven thin, blighted ears of grain devouring seven full ears. Joseph told Pharaoh

the dual dreams were both communicating the same message from God: the land of Egypt would see seven unusually prosperous years, followed by seven years of horrible famine. He also said that Pharaoh should stockpile everything he could during the years of plenty to sell during the years of famine. Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of this plan—which was how Joseph came to be in authority over his father and brothers when they ran out of food.

The Midianite’s dream of defeat (Judges 7:1–14): Gideon may have been the most reluctant judge in all of Israel. God commissioned him to raise an army to defeat the Midianites, but God cut back the forces to a scant 300 men. To strengthen Gideon’s resolve, God sent him to the outskirts of the enemy camp to overhear two soldiers talking. One had dreamt of a loaf of barley bread rolling into the camp and flattening a tent. The other, amazingly, interpreted the dream to mean that the Israelite Gideon would defeat the Midianites: “God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into [Gideon’s] hands” (Judges 7:14). Gideon took heart, followed God’s plan, and watched the Midianite soldiers slaughter each other (verses 19–22).

Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the statue (Daniel 2): When Nebuchadnezzar demanded that his wise men reveal both his dream and the meaning, Daniel obliged. The king’s dream had been of the statue of a man: a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, body and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, feet of iron and clay. A stone cut without human hands then struck the feet of the statue, and the statue crumbled, but the stone became a mighty mountain. Daniel revealed that the different parts of the statue were different earthly kingdoms that would come into power, making this dream a far-reaching prophecy. The gold head was Babylon, the silver chest and arms were Medo-Persia, the thighs were Greece, and the legs Rome. The exact identity of the feet has not yet been revealed; it seems to be related to the Roman Empire and the ten toes seem to correspond to the ten horns mentioned in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13. We know that the final worldwide kingdom will be ruled by the Antichrist. The stone in the dream, the one that destroys all the kingdoms and fills the earth, is the kingdom of God, established when Jesus returns to reign over all the earth forever.

Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the fallen tree (Daniel 4): On a personal level, Nebuchadnezzar’s second dream was much more disturbing than the first. The king saw a tree, chopped down and stripped of leaves and fruit, left as only a stump bound in iron and bronze. Reluctantly, Daniel revealed the interpretation of the dream: this was a warning that God would strike Nebuchadnezzar with a type of insanity. For seven years, the proud Nebuchadnezzar lost his reason and lived like an ox in the field. After his humiliation, the king was restored to his sanity and his position in the palace, and he had the good sense to praise Daniel’s God.

Daniel’s dream of the four beasts (Daniel 7:1–8): Daniel had several dreams and visions of end times events that he couldn’t understand. One was of four great beasts: a lion with eagles’ wings, a bear with three ribs in its teeth, a leopard with four bird’s wings and four heads, and a monster with iron teeth and ten horns. A messenger from heaven interprets the dream for Daniel: “The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth” (Daniel 7:17). The lion was Nebuchadnezzar; the bear was the Medo-Persian Empire (the three devoured ribs were Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt); the leopard was Greece (the four heads representing how the Greek Empire was torn into fourths after the death of Alexander the Great); and the last was the Roman Empire, but with a twist. Although the beast was Rome, the ten horns speak of future events. They will be ten world leaders who will revive the Roman Empire and bring forth the Antichrist, the “little horn” of verse 8.

The Bible mentions other examples of visions and dreams. Although God did reveal His plans in dreams to some people, He also gave strong warnings against those who would falsely claim to have prophetic dreams. If a prophet claimed to speak on God’s behalf but it was not actually

from God, proven by the fact that what he said did not come true, that prophet was to be put to death (Deuteronomy 18:20–22). We need not seek after dreams to hear from God. The written Word of God, provided through the agency of the prophets and apostles, is our rule for faith and practice. The indwelling Holy Spirit illuminates God's Word to us and helps us live out God's will for our lives.

How Joseph Prefigures Jesus Christ?

Joseph	Jesus
BELOVED OF HIS FATHER: Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children (Gen. 37:3a).	This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matt. 3:17b).
ENVIED AND HATED WITHOUT A CAUSE: And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more they hated him (Gen 37:4).	The chief priests had delivered him for envy (Mark 15:10). They hated me without a cause (John 15:25b)
HE FORETOLD THAT ONE DAY HE WOULD RULE: your sheaves stood...and made obeisance to my sheaf (Gen. 37:7).	Jesus said to him in reply, "You have said so. But I tell you: From now on you will see 'the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power' and 'coming on the clouds of heaven.'" (Matt. 26:64b).
ACCUSED OF BEING A DREAMER: And they said to one another, Behold, here come the dreamer (Gen. 37:19).	When his relatives heard of this they set out to seize him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."
SENT BY THE FATHER TO SEEK THE BROTHERS' WELFARE: Go then," he replied; "see if all is well with your brothers and the flocks, and bring back word." So he sent him off from the valley of Hebron. When Joseph reached Shechem (Gen. 37:14a).	I will send my beloved son... (Luke 20:13b)
REJECTED AND CONDEMNED TO DIE: They conspired against him to slay him (Gen. 37:18b). Gen 37:18 They saw him from a distance and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him	We will not have this man to reign over us (Luke 19:14b). But they cried, saying, Crucify him! Crucify him! (Luke 23:21). Matthew 27: 1 When it was morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.
STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHING: They stripped Joseph out of his coat...that was on him (Gen 37:23b).	And they stripped him (Matt. 27:28a).
THROWN INTO A PIT (alone, forsaken): And they took him, and cast him into a pit (Gen. 37:24a).	so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matt. 12:40b)
SOLD FOR SILVER INTO THE HANDS OF GENTILES: They sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver; and they brought Joseph into Egypt (Gen. 37:28b)	They bargained with Judas for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:15b).

<p>RAISED FROM THE PIT: They drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit (Gen. 37:28a)</p>	<p>Jesus rose again the third day according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 15:4b)</p>
<p>BECAME A SERVANT: And Joseph was brought down to Egypt...and he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian (Gen. 39:1-2).</p>	<p>I am among you as the one who serves (Luke 22:27b). He took upon him the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7b).</p>
<p>EVERYTHING HE DID PROSPERED: And the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand (Gen. 39:3b).</p>	<p>The pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand (Isaiah 53:10b).</p>
<p>RESISTED TEMPTATION: The temptation by Potiphar's wife (Read Gen. 39:7-12).</p>	<p>For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin (Hebrew 4:15)</p>
<p>FALSELY ACCUSED: Then she told him the same story: "The Hebrew slave whom you brought us came to me to amuse himself at my expense. But when I screamed, he left his cloak beside me and escaped outside." (Gen. 39:17-18).</p>	<p>But they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two* came forward (Matthew 26:60)</p>
<p>NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS: And Joseph's master...put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound (Gen. 39:20a).</p>	<p>...there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left (Luke 23:33).</p>
<p>PROMISED DELIVERANCE TO A CONDEMNED MAN: Joseph said to him: "This is its interpretation. The three branches are three days; within three days Pharaoh will single you out and restore you to your post. You will be handing Pharaoh his cup as you formerly did when you were his cupbearer (Gen. 40:13).</p>	<p>Today you will be with me in paradise (Luke 23:43b).</p>
<p>FORETOLD THE FUTURE ACCURATELY: And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us (Gen. 41:13a).</p>	<p>From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I AM. (John 13:19).</p>
<p>PROVED TO BE A GREAT COUNSELLOR: So Pharaoh said to Joseph: "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one as discerning and wise as you are (Gen. 41:39).</p>	<p>His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor... (Isa. 9:6b).</p>

<p>PROMOTED TO HONOR AND GLORY AND GIVEN A NEW NAME: Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Look, I put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." With that, Pharaoh took off his signet ring and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck (Gen. 41:41). Pharaoh also bestowed the name of Zaphenath-paneah on Joseph (41:45)</p>	<p>God also has highly exalted him and given him a new name which is above every name (Phil. 2:9).</p>
<p>ALL PEOPLE COMMANDED TO BOW TO HIM: He then had him ride in his second chariot, and they shouted "Abrek (homage) before him (Gen. 41:43b).</p>	<p>That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow (Phil. 2:10a).</p>
<p>PROVIDED FOR ALL IN NEED: And all the countries came...to Joseph to buy grain (Gen. 41:57a).</p>	<p>...I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall never hunger (John 6:35a).</p>
<p>HIS PEOPLE DID NOT RECOGNIZE HIM: And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him (Gen. 42:8).</p>	<p>Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? (John 14:9a).</p>
<p>HIS BROTHERS WERE TROUBLED WHEN THEY MET HIM: But now do not be distressed, and do not be angry with yourselves for having sold me here. It was really for the sake of saving lives that God sent me here ahead of you</p>	<p>so that when they look on him whom they have thrust through, they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and they will grieve for him as one grieves over a firstborn (Zech 12:10)</p>
<p>REVELATION AND RECONCILIATION:(Gen. 45:3b-9). I am Joseph," he said to his brothers. "Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could give him no answer, so dumbfounded were they at him. "Come closer to me," Joseph told his brothers. When they had done so, he said: "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. But now do not be distressed, and do not be angry with yourselves for having sold me here. It was really for the sake of saving lives that God sent me here ahead of you.</p>	<p>Thus all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come out of Zion, he will turn away godlessness from Jacob</p>
<p>Gen 41:55 Pharaoh said, "Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do"</p>	<p>John 2:5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you"</p>
<p>Gen 31-34 Joseph fed the hungry brothers</p>	<p>John 6:5-13 Jesus fed the hungry masses</p>

Betrayer feels intense regret: Gen 37:29-30
When Reuben went back to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not in it, he tore his garments, and returning to his brothers, he exclaimed: "The boy is gone! And I—where can I turn?"

Matthew 27:35 Then Judas, his betrayer, seeing that Jesus had been condemned, deeply regretted what he had done. He returned the thirty pieces of silver* to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? Look to it yourself." Flinging the money into the temple, he departed and went off and hanged himself

Joseph of OT prefigures St. Joseph in the NT: In Scripture, St. Joseph is a man of few words, but he is nonetheless a significant figure in the life of Christ and the life of the Church. What many may not know about St. Joseph is how he is prefigured in the Old Testament, and how seeing St. Joseph in this light can help draw us closer to this quiet carpenter from Nazareth who became the patron of the universal Church. Joseph, the son of Jacob, becomes the type of St. Joseph. Joseph of Egypt prepares us to look to Joseph of Nazareth in the New Testament. Joseph is the steward not only of Jesus, and Mary, and their lives – protecting them, caring for them, making sure that they are able to fulfill their mission. But he is also the protector and patron of the entire Church. That's why in the 19th century, St. Joseph was declared the patron of the universal Church, the entire Catholic Church. Because the Church sees that Joseph cared so carefully for our Blessed Mother and for Jesus. And so he cares for each one of us in the same way. The Joseph of the Old Testament was in many ways preparing the way for the Joseph of the New Testament, both participating in God's divine plan. They both had their role to play in salvation history, echoing each other's lives in many ways. Similarities between two Josephs in the Bible.

What's in a name? Do people with the same name sometimes have much in common? We can look at two famous men in the Bible, both named Joseph, and see their similarities. Joseph of the Old Testament is the first Joseph. The Church refers to him as a type, or foreshadowing, of Christ. But many saints hold that the first Joseph is also a prefigurement for St. Joseph. Let us consider ten parallels between Joseph of the Old Testament and St. Joseph.

First, both of them had a father named Jacob. Remember the biblical references to the great patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Jacob's son was Joseph. Matthew's gospel, which traces the family tree of Jesus, says that Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary of whom Christ was born.

The **second** parallel is that both of them were royalty. The first Joseph was a patriarch, following the great line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was the last and perhaps the greatest of the Old Testament patriarchs. St. Joseph also was royalty since he was a descendant of King David. Some Scripture scholars speculate that if Rome had not occupied Palestine at the time, and if the Davidic line was still intact, St. Joseph would have been eligible for the throne.

The **third** parallel between the first Joseph and St. Joseph is that both of them suffered and put up with the difficulties of their daily life without complaint. The first Joseph was minding his own business going out into the fields to see his brothers, and they plotted to kill him. They seized him, stripped him and threw him into a well. Then, when they saw a caravan of gypsies going to Egypt, they sold him into slavery. Joseph could have said, "Lord, here I am; a good man. Why are you allowing this suffering in my life?" Isn't that what we say at times? When we have difficult times in our life, we often ask "God, why me? What have I done wrong?" But, sometimes God allows us to go through suffering and pain for a greater good, just as he did

with Joseph in Egypt. Because Joseph was able to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, Pharaoh made him lord and ruler over his house. Joseph, formerly a shepherd boy, was now one of the most important men in Egypt.

St. Joseph had to go through many sufferings as well. Mary was well along in her pregnancy when, as members of the House of David, they had to journey to Bethlehem to take part in the census ordered by the Roman rulers. That involved a difficult journey of perhaps 85 miles on a donkey with no advance lodging reservations. But Joseph obeyed the law. He went and could find no lodging since Bethlehem was packed with other visitors who came for the same purpose. He kept knocking at the doors, but found no room. Think what was going through Joseph's mind. He was the husband, the provider, and knew that Mary's child was of divine origin. Finally, they found a cave in the countryside where the shepherds tended their sheep, and Jesus was born in a place where animals were sheltered. The King of heaven and earth was laid in a manger - a trough where the animals ate. Think of the suffering, the difficult time that Joseph went through. But, looking at it, good came from even that trying experience. For example, the prophecy that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem was fulfilled. It was not the prophecy that the Messiah was to be born in Nazareth. Additionally, the Holy Family had more privacy in the cave than they would have had in the crowded inn.

The **fourth** similarity between Joseph and St. Joseph is that both left their homes and went to Egypt. Joseph was sold into slavery and taken to Egypt. St. Joseph fled to Egypt with his family to escape Herod's wrath. The ability to understand dreams is their fifth similarity. In the Old Testament, Joseph gained fame for this ability. While still in prison, he was able to interpret the dreams of the baker and the cupbearer of Pharaoh. When Pharaoh had a strange dream of 7 fat cows being devoured by 7 skinny cows, he couldn't understand it. Pharaoh also had the dream of the stalk, which had seven healthy ears of corn. Suddenly there was a stalk with 7 withered ears of corn, which swallowed the healthy stalk. Pharaoh couldn't understand these dreams, so he called his magicians but they could not interpret the dreams. Pharaoh had heard of Joseph's ability, so he sent for him and asked him to interpret these dreams. Joseph gave Pharaoh the interpretation - that God was going to bless Egypt with 7 years of plenty, but after that would come 7 years of terrible famine. Because of this insight into the future, Pharaoh picked Joseph to be the manager of his house and ruler over all his possessions.

St. Joseph also understood the meaning of his dreams. The New Testament relates four dreams, which St. Joseph understood and unhesitatingly acted upon. The first was when he had doubts about whether to take Mary as his wife. The angel said "Fear not, Joseph, to accept Mary as your wife. It is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this Child." Joseph recognized the guidance in the dream as coming from God and followed the angel's bidding. Likewise, he recognized the urgency of the message conveyed in the second dream - "flee into Egypt. Herod is trying to kill the Child." In the third dream, Joseph understood that it was safe to return to Palestine since Herod was dead. Lastly, in the fourth dream, Joseph accepted the angel's advice to return to Nazareth because Herod's son had become king. St. Joseph's ability to recognize the divine guidance sent to him in dreams literally saved the Holy Family on several occasions.

The **sixth** parallel is that of being the ruler of the king's house and possessions. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, made Joseph ruler and lord over all his possessions in Egypt. St. Joseph, as head of the Holy Family, was ruler over the King of the Universe's home in Nazareth. Jesus, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Alpha and the Omega, chose Joseph to be the head of the Holy Family, to be the lord, master and ruler over the house.

The **seventh** similarity between the Joseph of the Old and Joseph of the New Testament is their purity and chastity. Remember what happened to Joseph. Joseph was a very strong man,

a very handsome man, and Potiphar's wife fell in love with him and tried to seduce him. Day after day she would ask him and try to lead him into having an adulterous affair, but Joseph steadfastly refused. Eventually, she lied and told Potiphar, "Look what this Hebrew tried to do to me." Potiphar put Joseph into prison, where he stayed for two years. In the New Testament, St. Joseph is the virginal husband of Mary. St. Joseph, the most pure and chaste man that God ever created, married the Blessed Mother. They lived a virginal life their entire marriage. The beautiful virtues of purity and chastity are thus exemplified in both Joseph of the Old and St. Joseph of the New.

The **eighth** parallel is that they both experienced poverty. Joseph of the Old Testament had everything material taken from him - his brothers stole his inheritance, he was sold into slavery and owned nothing, and he was unjustly imprisoned for a few years. St. Joseph knew poverty as well. We are told in the gospels that he was a carpenter, a member of the working class. When he uprooted his family and went to Bethlehem and then to Egypt, he probably took his tools with him so he could continue earning a living, but that is about all he had in terms of material goods. We also know that the Holy Family was poor because at the Presentation they gave two turtle doves, the offering of the poor.

Both Josephs were responsible for feeding the entire world, which is their ninth similarity. Because of Joseph's advice, Egypt was the only country in the world that had grain during the famine. The other nations came to Egypt to buy their grain. Thanks to Joseph, the peoples of the world had food, and Pharaoh became even richer and more powerful. How does that relate to St. Joseph? St. Joseph was the nurturer and the one who fed Jesus. He practiced his trade and earned the money to buy the food, which fed Jesus. St. Joseph, as head of the Holy Family, taught Jesus a trade and provided his initial religious instruction. He helped Jesus grow to manhood and become for us the Eucharist, feeding us with his own Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. Thus, indirectly Joseph has fed the entire world with the Bread of Life.

Lastly, we can go to both Josephs in times of need. The people of Egypt and the other nations went to Joseph for the grain they needed during the great famine. During this time of suffering there was a saying, "Go to Joseph for what you need." Because Joseph had such tremendous influence with the Pharaoh, many peoples' petitions were answered. We priests, religious and lay people can go to St. Joseph in our time of need. Whatever difficulties and sufferings we have, we go to Joseph because he has great influence with his Son, the King of the Universe. Jesus, good Son that he is, still follows the precepts of the Fourth Commandment and, so long as it is in accord with the will of the Father, does as his mother and foster father ask. These, then, are ten similarities between Joseph of the Old Testament and St. Joseph, two of the greatest figures in the Bible. Let us now recognize how they have experienced many of the same trials and sorrows we face, and let us follow their example of steadfast love and service of God. They stand ready and able to help us, if we but "go to Joseph."

St. Bernard of Clairvaux shared his thoughts on the two Josephs in one of his homilies: What are we to think of the dignity of Joseph, who deserved to be called and to be regarded as the father of our Savior? We may draw a parallel between him and the great Patriarch. As the first Joseph was by the envy of his brothers sold and sent into Egypt, the second Joseph fled into Egypt with Christ to escape the envy of Herod. The chaste Patriarch remained faithful to his master, despite the evil suggestions of his mistress. St. Joseph, recognizing in his wife the Virgin Mother of his Lord, guarded her with the utmost fidelity and chastity. To the Joseph of old was given interpretation of dreams, to the new Joseph a share in the heavenly secrets. His predecessor kept a store of corn, not for himself, but for the whole nation; our Joseph received the Living Bread from heaven, that he might preserve it for his own salvation and that of all the world.

What does the life of Joseph teach us? The story of Joseph's life is one of the most relatable in the Bible. It is filled with family drama and saturated with emotions. The story of Joseph is so important because we can draw so many practical, encouraging and life-changing ideas from it.

Spiritual Lessons from the life of Joseph

1. **God's dreams for us can make others uncomfortable:** One of the first lessons from the life of Joseph is that God often has plans for us that we ourselves do not desire, yet, it can produce some unfavorable backlash. As far as we know, Joseph did not have a hankering for leadership. When he had his dreams, there is no evidence that he knew what they meant. In fact, it was his father who pointed out what it might mean – that at some point in the future, Joseph would rule over his father and brothers. Joseph did not have this dream for himself. Yet, his brothers were angry and jealous. When they called him "Joseph the dreamer", it was by no means a compliment. We can't help what God has in store for us. If others have a problem with it, let them have it and you have no control over them
2. **Nothing stops God's plans:** Although Joseph's brothers tried to destroy God's plan for his life by selling him into slavery, their actions only served to cause God's plans to fall right into place. This is the second lesson from the life of Joseph. People's jealousy or actual attempts to stand in our way will never ever make a difference to what God has in store. In fact, those things can only delay God's plan, but not deny them. God has our back
3. **The law of Cause and Effect on the innocent:** The third lesson from the life of Joseph actually has to do with forces that had nothing to do with Joseph himself. Back when Jacob was a young man, he and his mother schemed so that he would get the blessing which belonged to his brother Esau. And just like that, the same behavior presented itself in his sons. Joseph fell victim to a generational curse of deception. It's a good thing that God is merciful, even in these situations because Joseph's story turned out to glorify Him.
4. **In hard times, always watch for how God shows up:** Although Joseph ended up in Egypt because of unfortunate family issues, God never left him alone in this country of strangers. Such a powerful lesson from the life of Joseph. The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. (Genesis 39:2-6). God also shows up when the baker and wine bearer's dreams were correctly interpreted by Joseph. This was another confirmation for Joseph that God had not left him alone. When there is a calling on our life, God is not in the business of allowing us to flounder. He will always be there. Orchestrating the pieces and guiding us.
5. **Integrity and Obedience beat lies, all the time.** One of the most powerful life principles from the life of Joseph has to do with integrity. When Joseph worked in Potiphar's house, there was nothing that was out of bounds for him, except the wife. Although he tried to avoid her at all costs, she would not leave him alone. But his integrity was driven by his sound commitment and obedience to God. God's test is unavoidable in our life
6. **Leadership skills of Joseph:** Although Joseph was called to leadership, we notice that he did not ascend to that great position overnight. He had various tests. One of them was Mrs. Potiphar and he passed with flying colors. Before that, he did his work exceptionally well in Potiphar's house. After that, he distinguished himself in prison. God needed to be sure that he was going to be faithful in little things before he was given more things to handle. We

should always give our best, even if we hate your job or the situation we are in. God is watching our level of faithfulness with what He has put on our plate now. When the time comes, God will present us with the opportunity to move us into our biggest blessing, just like it happened for Joseph. So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?" Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you." (Genesis 41:38-41)

7. **God really knows our readiness for leadership:** Why didn't God choose one of his older brothers for the task Joseph? Because God knows all things and he knew that Joseph's brothers had evil hearts. Before they tried to kill Joseph, they slaughtered an entire town after their sister was raped. Forgiveness was just not a thing for them. Judah tried to rob his daughter-in-law of her right to have children. But Joseph had a heart for God. He was humble and obedient. He was willing to follow God's lead. He was willing to forgive. Joseph was truly a genuine soul. We can learn this one lesson from the life of Joseph: we cannot fool God. He will not trust us with things that he knows our character cannot carry.
8. **God pushes right people into leadership role:** One of the most powerful leadership lessons from the life of Joseph is the idea that God had to push Joseph into purpose. Joseph was a natural born leader. We know this because anyone who is humble in following usually will make a great leader. We can also see that he followed his father's instructions. However, Joseph was comfortable at home. He was spoiled by his father and was not using the skills God had given him. In Egypt, he was forced to rise up and shine. God will sometimes orchestrate situations to force us to use the gifts he has blessed us with. If we don't obey, he will create uncomfortable situations so we have no choice but move into purpose.
9. **People deserve second chances:** And yet another leadership lesson can be gleaned from how Joseph treated his brothers who had wronged him. Although he put them through grueling tests, those plots and schemes served a purpose. Joseph was willing to forgive and to accept them back into his life, but he needed to see if they were deserving of a second chance. So Joseph approached this situation with caution and wisdom. His brothers seemed to be guilt-ridden by the 20 year old secret they had kept from their father. But they also seemed truly sorry. That is what Joseph needed to see to determine whether or not they should really get a second opportunity to enter his life.
10. **Trust God's process:** Perhaps the most powerful lesson from the life of Joseph was that he trusted God **completely**. This is both a spiritual lesson and a leadership. Through the 23 years in Egypt before his brothers came, he kept the faith and trusted God. God allowed Joseph's suffering because in the bigger picture, his calling was to save the then known world from starvation. In this regard, Joseph is a type of Christ, enduring hardship with the goal of saving others. Joseph's suffering brought glory to God. When the entire story unfolded, Joseph recognized how man's selfishness only served to highlight God's power and faithfulness. But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. (Genesis 50:19-21)