

I Connect Sunday School Class Notes

October 3, 2021

Meet in Building B, Room 1

Praises and Concerns

Genesis 37

Commentary

The “account of Jacob’s descendants” is about Joseph. Joseph is hated by his brethren and sold into Egypt.

The chief event with which the rest of Genesis is concerned, namely, the migration of Israel to Egypt, displays the working out of God’s purposes declared in Genesis 15. In Egypt the chosen race grew in peace from a tribe to a nation, instead of having to encounter the hostility of the Canaanites as their numbers increased and their aspirations became known. In Egypt, too, they came in contact with a highly civilised and law-abiding nation, and learnt from them much of the highest value for the future.

There are many points in the history of Joseph which remind us of Christ, e.g. in his being the loved son of his father, in his being sent to his brethren who hated and rejected him, in his humiliation and glory, and in the benefits he conferred on those among whom he came to dwell.

1 Jacob lived in the land of Canaan where his father was an immigrant. **2** This is the account of Jacob's descendants. Joseph was 17 years old and tended the flock with his brothers. While he was helping the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives, Joseph told their father unflattering things about them. **3** Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons because he was born when Jacob was old. Jacob had made for him a long robe.

Commentary

A coat of many colours (RM) 'is a long garment with sleeves,' i.e. reaching to the ankles and wrists, and worn by persons of distinction. The ordinary coat had no sleeves and reached only to the knees.

4 When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of his brothers, they hated him and couldn't even talk nicely to him. **5** Joseph had a dream and told it to his brothers, which made them hate him even more.

Commentary

Dreams (a means of divine revelation or communication) indicate a contemplative disposition in Joseph: their character foreshadows his future pre-eminence among his brethren. But his dream has no interpretation.

6 He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had. **7** When we were binding stalks of grain in the field, my stalk got up and stood upright, while your stalks gathered around it and bowed down to my stalk." **8** His brothers said to him, "Will you really be our king and rule over us?" So they hated him even more because of the dreams he told them. **9** Then Joseph had another dream and described it to his brothers: "I've just dreamed again, and this time the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." **10** When he described it to his father and brothers, his father scolded him and said to him, "What kind of dreams have you dreamed? Am I and your mother and your brothers supposed to come and bow down to the ground in front of you?" **11** His brothers were jealous of him, but his father took careful note of the matter. **12** Joseph's brothers went to tend their father's flocks near Shechem. **13** Israel said to Joseph, "Aren't your brothers tending the sheep near Shechem? Come, I'll send you to them." And he said, "I'm ready." **14** Jacob said to him, "Go! Find out how your brothers are and how the flock is, and report back to me." So Jacob sent him from the Hebron Valley. When he approached Shechem, **15** a man found him wandering in the field and asked him, "What are you looking for?" **16** Joseph said, "I'm looking for my brothers. Tell me, where are they tending the sheep?" **17** The man said, "They left here. I heard them saying, 'Let's go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan.

18 They saw Joseph in the distance before he got close to them, and they plotted to kill him. **19** The brothers said to each other, "Here comes the big dreamer. **20** Come on now, let's kill him and throw him into one of the cisterns, and we'll say a wild animal devoured him. Then we will see what becomes of his dreams!" **21** When Reuben heard what they said, he saved him from them, telling them, "Let's not take his life." **22** Reuben said to them, "Don't spill his blood! Throw him into this desert cistern, but don't lay a hand on him." He intended to save Joseph from them and take him back to his father.

Commentary

As firstborn, Reuben is responsible for assuming the role of his father in Jacob's absence. He will need to answer for the harm done to Joseph.

23 When Joseph reached his brothers, they stripped off Joseph's long robe, **24** took him, and threw him into the cistern, an empty cistern with no water in it. **25** When they sat down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with camels carrying sweet resin, medicinal resin, and fragrant resin on their way down to Egypt. **26** Judah said to his brothers, "What do we gain if we kill our brother and hide his blood? **27** Come on, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites. Let's not harm him because he's our brother; he's family." His brothers agreed.

28 When some Midianite traders passed by, they pulled Joseph up out of the cistern. They sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, and they brought Joseph to Egypt. **29** When Reuben returned to the cistern and found that Joseph wasn't in it, he tore his clothes. **30** Then he returned to his brothers and said, "The boy's gone! And I—where can I go now?" **31** His brothers took Joseph's robe, slaughtered a male goat, and dipped the robe in the blood. **32** They took the long robe, brought it to their father, and said, "We found this. See if it's your son's robe or not." **33** He recognized it and said, "It's my son's robe! A wild animal has devoured him. Joseph must have been torn to pieces!" **34** Then Jacob tore his clothes, put a simple mourning cloth around his waist, and mourned for his son for many days. **35** All of his sons and daughters got up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted, telling them, "I'll go to my grave mourning for my son." And Joseph's father wept for him. **36** Meanwhile the Midianites had sold Joseph to the Egyptians, to Potiphar, Pharaoh's chief officer, commander of the royal guard.

Genesis 38

Commentary

Joseph is suspended in Egypt temporarily in order to present this episode. Besides creating suspense, this chapter sets up a contrast between the seedy details of Judah's story with Joseph's unsurpassed morality in the next chapter. But first....

Wesleyan discussion of “Image of God.”

Wesley believed that God created humans in the image of God or “capable of God.” This means that we are capable of knowing, loving and obeying our Creator. As love is the very image of God for Wesley, love should be the sole principle of every feeling, thought, word and deed; human character should reflect what God is – Love.

The History of Judah

The sins recorded in this chapter testify eloquently to the great need the world had of the Greatest of the descendants of Judah, who came to teach the virtue of purity and the sanctity of family life. The honesty and truthfulness of the historian are shown in his not concealing the dark spots in the history of Judah, whose descendants attained to such greatness. The direct purpose of the narrative is to show the ancestry of David, who was descended from Perez the son of Judah by Tamar: see Ruth 4:18; Matthew 1:3.

Judah:

DEFINITION

1. (in the Bible) a Hebrew patriarch, the fourth son of Jacob and Leah.
 - the tribe of Israel traditionally descended from Judah, the most powerful of the twelve tribes of Israel.
2. the southern part of ancient Palestine, occupied by the tribe of Judah. After the reign of Solomon (c.930 bc), it formed a separate kingdom from Israel. Later it was known as [Judaea](#).

1 At that time, Judah moved away from his brothers and settled near an Adullamite named Hirah.

Commentary

Adullam was in the lowland of Judah, SW. of Jerusalem.

2 There Judah saw the daughter of a Canaanite whose name was Shua, and he married her.

RK Commentary

Remember that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob resisted intermarriage with the Canaanites to keep the family lines pure.

After he slept with her, **3** she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, whom she named Er. **4** She became pregnant again, gave birth to a son, and named him Onan. **5** Then she gave birth to one more son and named him Shelah. She was in Chezib when she gave birth to him. **6** Judah married his oldest son Er to a woman named Tamar. **7** But the LORD considered Judah's oldest son Er immoral, and the LORD put him to death. **8** Judah said to Onan, "Go to your brother's wife, do your duty as her brother-in-law, and provide children for your brother."

Commentary

The law in Deuteronomy 25:5-10, respecting the duty of a surviving brother to marry his deceased brother's widow in order to continue the race, will fully explain the circumstances here detailed.

9 Onan knew the children wouldn't be his, so when he slept with his brother's wife, he wasted his semen on the ground, so he wouldn't give his brother children.

Commentary

Onan refuses because as the secondborn, he stands to inherit Er's double portion, the right of the first born. Providing offspring for his deceased brother would be unprofitable for his own family.

10 The LORD considered what he did as wrong and put him to death too. 11 Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, "Stay as a widow in your father's household until my son Shelah grows up." He thought Shelah would die like his brothers had. So Tamar went and lived in her father's household.

Commentary

By sending Tamar away a childless widow to her father's house, Judah leaves her without marriage prospects and in limbo, perhaps the most vulnerable position for a woman in the ancient world.

When Judah does not give his third son as a husband for Tamar, it is clear that she has been wronged and is desperate.

12 After a long time, Judah's wife the daughter of Shua died. Then, after a period of mourning, he and his neighbor Hirah the Adullamite went up to Timnah, to those who were shearing his sheep. **13** Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is now on his way up to Timnah to shear his sheep." **14** So Tamar took off the clothing she wore as a widow, covered herself with a veil, put on makeup, and sat down at the entrance to Enaim on the road to Timnah, since she realized that although Shelah had already grown up, she hadn't been given to him as a wife. **15** Judah saw her and thought she was a prostitute because she had covered her face. **16** He turned to her beside the road and said, "Let me sleep with you," because he didn't know she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give me for sleeping with you?" **17** He said, "I will give you a kid goat from my flock." She said, "Only if you give me some deposit, as security to guarantee that you will send it." **18** He said, "What kind of deposit should I give you?" And she said, "Your seal, its cord, and the staff in your hand." He gave these to her, slept with her, and she became pregnant by him.

Commentary

The "seal" was likely a cylinder seal carried around one's neck on a "cord" and used for personal identification in business contracts.

The "staff" was the common rod or shaft most likely carved with distinctive markings to identify its owner.

These were objects known throughout much of the ancient Near East as insignia of a prominent man, which would make it possible for her to later positively identify the father of her child.

19 Then she got up, left, and took off her veil, dressing once again in the clothing she wore as a widow. **20** Judah sent the kid goat with his neighbor the Adullamite so he could take back the deposits from the woman, but he couldn't find her. **21** He asked the locals of that place, "Where's the consecrated worker who was at Enaim on the road?" But they said, "There's no consecrated worker here." **22** So he went back to Judah and said, "I couldn't find her. The locals even said, 'There's no holy woman here.'" **23** Judah said, "Let her keep everything so we aren't laughed at. I did send this kid goat, but you couldn't find her." **24** About three months later, Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has become a prostitute and is now pregnant because of it." And Judah said, "Bring her out so that she may be burned." **25** When she was brought out, she sent this message to her father-in-law, "I'm pregnant by the man who owns these things. See if you recognize whose seal, cord, and staff these are." **26** Judah recognized them and said, "She's more righteous than I am, because I didn't allow her to marry my son Shelah." Judah never knew her intimately again.

27 When she gave birth, she discovered she had twins in her womb.

28 At birth, one boy put out his hand, and the midwife took it and tied a red thread on his hand, saying, "This one came out first." **29** As soon as he pulled his hand back, his brother came out, and she said, "You've burst out on your own." So he was named Perez. **30** Afterward, his brother with the red thread on his hand came out, and he was named Zerah.

Commentary

A surprise ending, Perez is a direct ancestor of King David through the genealogical line of Boaz, Obed and Jesse. This "sordid" story is not only about Judah and Tamar but also about Israel's royal family.

Genesis 39

Commentary

Returning to Joseph in Potiphar's house, this chapter emphasizes that "the Lord was with Joseph," who prospers whether the circumstances are good or ill.

1 When Joseph had been taken down to Egypt, Potiphar, Pharaoh's chief officer, the commander of the royal guard and an Egyptian, purchased him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. **2** The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man and served in his Egyptian master's household.

3 His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made everything he did successful. **4** Potiphar thought highly of Joseph, and Joseph became his assistant; he appointed Joseph head of his household and put everything he had under Joseph's supervision. **5** From the time he appointed Joseph head of his household and of everything he had, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's household because of Joseph. The LORD blessed everything he had, both in the household and in the field. **6** So he handed over everything he had to Joseph and didn't pay attention to anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome. **7** Some time later, his master's wife became attracted to Joseph and said, "Sleep with me."

Commentary

Joseph was yet but a youth, when temptations are strongest, and he was far removed from all the restraining influences of home. But He who was 'the fear of Isaac' (Genesis 31:42) was 'the fear of Joseph' also, and his resolute resistance to temptation teaches that the prospect of earthly advantage or pleasure should never for a moment close our ears to the voice of conscience.

8 He refused and said to his master's wife, "With me here, my master doesn't pay attention to anything in his household; he's put everything he has under my supervision.

9 No one is greater than I am in this household, and he hasn't denied me anything except you, since you are his wife. How could I do this terrible thing and sin against God?" **10** Every single day she tried to convince him, but he wouldn't agree to sleep with her or even to be with her. **11** One day when Joseph arrived at the house to do his work, none of the household's men were there. **12** She grabbed his garment, saying, "Lie down with me." But he left his garment in her hands and ran outside. **13** When she realized that he had left his garment in her hands and run outside, **14** she summoned the men of her house and said to them, "Look, my husband brought us a Hebrew to ridicule us. He came to me to lie down with me, but I screamed. **15** When he heard me raise my voice and scream, he left his garment with me and ran outside." **16** She kept his garment with her until Joseph's master came home, **17** and she told him the same thing: "The Hebrew slave whom you brought to us, to ridicule me, came to me; **18** but when I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment with me and ran outside." **19** When Joseph's master heard the thing that his wife told him, "This is what your servant did to me," he was incensed. **20** Joseph's master took him and threw him in jail, the place where the king's prisoners were held.

Commentary

Potiphar was overseer of the royal prison.

While he was in jail, **21** the LORD was with Joseph and remained loyal to him. He caused the jail's commander to think highly of Joseph. **22** The jail's commander put all of the prisoners in the jail under Joseph's supervision, and he was the one who determined everything that happened there. **23** The jail's commander paid no attention to anything under Joseph's supervision, because the LORD was with him and made everything he did successful.

Genesis 40

Commentary

Joseph interprets the Dreams of Pharaoh's Officers, leading to his being brought to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, and resulting in his elevation over Egypt and salvation of the masses.

1 Some time later, both the wine steward and the baker for Egypt's king offended their master, the king of Egypt. **2** Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief wine steward and the chief baker, **3** and he put them under arrest with the commander of the royal guard in the same jail where Joseph was imprisoned. **4** The commander of the royal guard assigned Joseph to assist them. After they had been under arrest for some time, **5** both of them—the wine steward and the baker for Egypt's king who were imprisoned in the jail—had dreams one night, and each man's dream had its own meaning.

Commentary

Ancient Egyptians believed dreams were encoded revelations, leaving one in need of a specialist in the science of dream interpretation.

6 When Joseph met them in the morning, he saw that they were upset. **7** He asked the officers of Pharaoh who were under arrest with him in his master's house, "Why do you look so distressed today?" **8** They answered, "We've both had dreams, but there's no one to interpret them." Joseph said to them, "Don't interpretations belong to God? Describe your dreams to me." **9** The chief wine steward described his dream to Joseph: "In my dream there was a vine right in front of me, **10** and on the vine were three branches. When it budded, its blossoms appeared, and its clusters ripened into grapes. **11** Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, so I took the grapes, crushed them into Pharaoh's cup, and put the cup in Pharaoh's hand." **12** Joseph said to him, "This is the dream's interpretation: The three branches are three days. **13** After three days, Pharaoh will give you an audience and return you to your position. You will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just the way things were before when you were his wine steward. **14** But please, remember me when you are doing well and be loyal to me. Put in a good word for me to Pharaoh, so he sets me free from this prison. **15** I was stolen from the land of the Hebrews, and here too I've done nothing to be thrown into this dungeon."

16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, "It was the same for me. In my dream, there were three baskets of white bread on my head. **17** In the basket on top there were baked goods for Pharaoh's food, but birds were eating them out of the basket on my head." **18** Joseph responded, "This is the dream's interpretation: The three baskets are three days. **19** After three days, Pharaoh will give you an audience and will hang you from a tree where birds will peck your flesh from you."

Commentary

The Egyptians held that after a stay of 3000 years in the unseen world, the soul re-entered its former body, and commenced a fresh existence on the earth. They therefore took the greatest pains to preserve the bodies of the dead. For a body to be devoured by the birds, as Joseph foretold, would be regarded as a terrible doom.

20 The third day was Pharaoh's birthday, and he gave a party for all of his servants. Before all of his servants, he gave an audience to the chief wine steward and the chief baker. **21** He returned the chief wine steward to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. **22** But the chief baker he hanged, just as Joseph had said would happen when he interpreted their dreams for them. **23** But the chief wine steward didn't remember Joseph; he forgot all about him.

Genesis 41

1 Two years later, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing near the Nile. **2** In front of him, seven healthy-looking, fattened cows climbed up out of the Nile and grazed on the reeds. **3** Just then, seven other cows, terrible-looking and scrawny, climbed up out of the Nile after them and stood beside them on the bank of the Nile. **4** The terrible-looking, scrawny cows devoured the seven healthy-looking, fattened cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. **5** He went back to sleep and had a second dream, in which seven ears of grain, full and healthy, grew on a single stalk. **6** Just then, seven ears of grain, scrawny and scorched by the east wind, sprouted after them, **7** and the scrawny ears swallowed up the full and well-formed ears. Then Pharaoh woke up and realized it was a dream. **8** In the morning, he was disturbed and summoned all of Egypt's religious experts and all of its advisors. Pharaoh described his dreams to them, but they couldn't interpret them for Pharaoh. **9** Then the chief wine steward spoke to Pharaoh: "Today I've just remembered my mistake. **10** Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker under arrest with the commander of the royal guard. **11** We both dreamed one night, he and I, and each of our dreams had its own interpretation. **12** A young Hebrew man, a servant of the commander of the royal guard, was with us. We described our dreams to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us, giving us an interpretation for each dream.

13 His interpretations came true exactly: Pharaoh restored me to my position but hanged him." **14** So Pharaoh summoned Joseph, and they quickly brought him from the dungeon. He shaved, changed clothes, and appeared before Pharaoh.

Commentary

He shaved himself so as to be ceremonially clean in Pharaoh's presence, a distinctively Egyptian trait. 'The Hebrews regarded their beard with peculiar pride, cultivated it with care, touched it at supplications, often swore by it, and deemed its mutilation an extreme ignominy: hence, in mourning, they shaved their beards and hair' (Kalisch). The Egyptians, on the other hand, never allowed the hair to grow unless they were in mourning, or prisoners, or belonged to the poorer classes. To be shaved was regarded as essential to ceremonial purity, as well as to cleanliness:

15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, but no one could interpret it. Then I heard that when you hear a dream, you can interpret it." **16** Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It's not me. God will give Pharaoh a favorable response." **17** So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile. **18** In front of me, seven fattened, stout cows climbed up out of the Nile and grazed on the reeds. **19** Just then, seven other cows, weak and frail and thin, climbed up after them. I've never seen such awful cows in all the land

of Egypt. **20** Then the thin, frail cows devoured the first seven, fattened cows. **21** But after they swallowed them whole, no one would have known it. They looked just as bad as they had before. Then I woke up. **22** I went to sleep again and saw in my dream seven full and healthy ears of grain growing on one stalk. **23** Just then, seven hard and thin ears of grain, scorched by the east wind, sprouted after them, **24** and the thin ears swallowed up the healthy ears. I told the religious experts, but they couldn't explain it to me." **25** Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh has actually had one dream. God has announced to Pharaoh what he is about to do. **26** The seven healthy cows are seven years, and the seven healthy ears of grain are seven years. It's actually one dream. **27** The seven thin and frail cows, climbing up after them, are seven years. The seven thin ears of grain, scorched by the east wind, are seven years of famine. **28** It's just as I told Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. **29** Seven years of great abundance are now coming throughout the entire land of Egypt. **30** After them, seven years of famine will appear, and all of the abundance in the land of Egypt will be forgotten. The famine will devastate the land. **31** No one will remember the abundance in the land because the famine that follows will be so very severe. **32** The dream occurred to Pharaoh twice because God has determined to do it, and God will make it happen soon.

RK Commentary

The bible was written in a time of a primarily oral culture. Repetition is often used for emphasis or to drive home a point (as Seeker of Truth mentioned), and to make things easier to remember.

33 "Now Pharaoh should find an intelligent, wise man and give him authority over the land of Egypt. **34** Then Pharaoh should appoint administrators over the land and take one-fifth of all the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. **35** During the good years that are coming, they should collect all such food and store the grain under Pharaoh's control, protecting the food in the cities. **36** This food will be reserved for the seven years of famine to follow in the land of Egypt so that the land won't be ravaged by the famine."

Commentary

Joseph's suggestion was that a fifth part of the corn crop should be required of the people for the next seven years to be stored up by the government; this would keep a quantity in the country which would otherwise have been sold to other lands. The corn tax was already an important part of Egyptian revenue, and its increase in years of such abundant plenty would be no hardship.

37 This advice seemed wise to Pharaoh and all his servants,

38 and Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man with more God-given gifts than this one?" **39** Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, no one is as intelligent and wise as you are. **40** You will be in charge of my kingdom, and all my people will obey your command. Only as the enthroned king will I be greater than you." **41** Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Know this: I've given you authority over the entire land of Egypt." **42** Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, he dressed him in linen clothes, and he put a gold necklace around his neck. **43** He put Joseph on the chariot of his second-in-command, and everyone in front of him cried out, "Attention!" So Pharaoh installed him over the entire land of Egypt. **44** Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh; no one will do anything or go anywhere in all the land of Egypt without your permission." **45** Pharaoh renamed Joseph, Zaphenath-paneah, and married him to Asenath, the daughter of Potiphora the priest of Heliopolis. Then Joseph assumed control of the land of Egypt.

Commentary

Zaphnaph-paaneah, meaning, perhaps, 'God, the Living One, has spoken.' It is a word of Egyptian origin, 'One belonging to the goddess Neith, the Egyptian Minerva, goddess of wisdom.' Poti-pherah, 'One given by Ra the sun-god.'

46 Joseph was 30 years old when he began to serve Pharaoh, Egypt's king, when he left Pharaoh's court and traveled through the entire land of Egypt. **47** During the seven years of abundance, the land produced plentifully. **48** He collected all of the food during the seven years of abundance in the land of Egypt, and stored the food in cities. In each city, he stored the food from the fields surrounding it. **49** Joseph amassed grain like the sand of the sea. There was so much that he stopped trying to measure it because it was beyond measuring. **50** Before the years of famine arrived, Asenath the daughter of Potiphera, priest of Heliopolis, gave birth to two sons for Joseph. **51** Joseph named the oldest son Manasseh, "because," he said, "God has helped me forget all of my troubles and everyone in my father's household." **52** He named the second Ephraim, "because," he said, "God has given me children in the land where I've been treated harshly." **53** The seven years of abundance in the land of Egypt came to an end, **54** and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. The famine struck every country, but the entire land of Egypt had bread. **55** When the famine ravaged the entire land of Egypt and the people pleaded to Pharaoh for bread, Pharaoh said to all of the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph. Do whatever he tells you." **56** The famine covered every part of the land, and Joseph opened all of the granaries and sold grain to the Egyptians. In the land of Egypt, the famine became more and more severe.

57 Every country came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because in every country the famine had also become more severe.

Commentary

Wesleyan thoughts on “Steward:

Stewardship, for Wesley, emerged out of a sense of indebtedness to God for all we have. Unlike God, we are limited; we must constantly rely on God for sustenance and saving grace. Wesley understood the moral command behind good stewardship as a quality of life that gives back to God, not for the sake of personal merit, but out of responsibility and gratitude. In his sermon, “The Use of Money,” Wesley urges his readers to gain all we can, save all we can and give all we can. Faithful stewardship extends beyond the use of money. Wesley expected the totality of the Christian life, in speech, conduct and influence over others, to reflect the same careful consideration of the gifts that God gives to each person.

Genesis 42

Commentary

The first trip to Egypt, in which the famine forces Jacob’s family to turn to Egypt to buy food.

1 When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why are you staring blankly at each other? 2 I've just heard that there's grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us so that we can survive and not starve to death." 3 So Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. 4 However, Jacob didn't send Joseph's brother Benjamin along with his brothers because he thought something bad might happen to him. 5 Israel's sons came to buy grain with others who also came since the famine had spread to the land of Canaan. 6 As for Joseph, he was the land's governor, and he was the one selling grain to all the land's people. When Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him, their faces to the ground. 7 When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he acted like he didn't know them. He spoke to them with a harsh tone and said, "Where have you come from?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan to buy food." 8 Joseph recognized his brothers, but they didn't recognize him. 9 Joseph remembered the dreams he had dreamed about them, and said to them, "You are spies. You've come to look for the country's weaknesses."

Commentary

Ye are spies - Egypt was always liable to attack from Asia, and fortresses were built along that frontier to repel invasion. By suggesting that they were foreigners who were spying out the

nakedness of the land, i.e. how far it was open to attack from hostile nations, Joseph had an opportunity of enquiring about his family.

10 They said to him, "No, Master. Your servants have just come to buy food. **11** We are all sons of one man. We are honest men. Your servants aren't spies."

Commentary

This was a strong argument. No father would have risked the lives of all his children at once on such dangerous work as that of spies.

12 He said to them, "No. You've come to look for the country's weaknesses." **13** They said, "We, your servants, are twelve brothers, sons of one man in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, but one is gone." **14** Joseph said to them, "It's just as I've said to you. You are spies! **15** But here is how to prove yourselves: As Pharaoh lives, you won't leave here until your youngest brother arrives. **16** Send one of you to get your brother, but the rest of you will stay in prison. We will find out if your words are true. If not, as Pharaoh lives, you are certainly spies."

Commentary

Joseph perseveres in this charge in order to have a pretext for getting Benjamin to Egypt. He hoped too, perhaps, that his father would follow when his favourite son had left him.

17 He put them all in prison for three days. **18** On the third day, Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I'm a God-fearing man. **19** If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay in prison, and the rest of you, go, take grain back to those in your households who are hungry. **20** But bring your youngest brother back to me so that your words will prove true and you won't die." So they prepared to do this. **21** The brothers said to each other, "We are clearly guilty for what we did to our brother when we saw his life in danger and when he begged us for mercy, but we didn't listen. That's why we're in this danger now." **22** Reuben responded to them, "Didn't I tell you, 'Don't do anything wrong to the boy'? But you wouldn't listen. So now this is payback for his death." **23** They didn't know that Joseph was listening to them because they were using an interpreter. **24** He stepped away from them and wept. When he returned, he spoke with them again. Then he took Simeon from them and tied him up in front of them. **25** Then Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put back each man's silver into his own sack, and to give them provisions for their trip, and it was done. **26** They loaded their grain onto their donkeys, and they set out. **27** When they stopped to spend the night, one of them opened his sack to feed his donkey, and he saw his silver at the top of his sack. **28** He said to his brothers, "My silver's been returned. It's right here in my sack." Their hearts stopped. Terrified, they said to each other, "What has God done to us?" **29** When they

got back to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they described to him everything that had happened to them: **30** "The man, the country's governor, spoke to us with a harsh tone and accused us of being spies in the country. **31** We told him, 'We're honest men, not spies. **32** We are twelve brothers, all our father's sons. One of us is gone, but the youngest is right now with our father in the land of Canaan.' **33** The man, the country's governor, told us, 'This is how I will know you are honest men: Leave one of your brothers with me, take grain for those in your households who are hungry, and go. **34** But bring back your youngest brother to me. Then I will know that you are not spies but honest men. I will give your brother back to you, and you may travel throughout the country.'" **35** When they opened their sacks, each man found a pouch of his silver in his sack. When they and their father saw their pouches of silver, they were afraid. **36** Their father Jacob said to them, "You've taken my children from me. Joseph's gone. Simeon's gone. And you are taking Benjamin. All this can't really be happening to me!" **37** Reuben said to his father, "You may put both of my sons to death if I don't bring him back to you. Make him my responsibility, and I will make sure he returns to you." **38** But Jacob said to him, "My son won't go down with you because his brother's dead and he's been left all alone. If anything were to happen to him on the trip you are taking, you would send me—old as I am—to my grave in grief."

**The Lord bless us and keep us;
the Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace.**