

Read Genesis chapter 29

1. This is an often read, well known passage. Joseph is one of the few Old Testament characters who is depicted as always morally upright. His faith in God, personal integrity, and perseverance are unwavering. Let's look first at how the first two characteristics are related.

1a. In what ways could Joseph have demonstrated to Potiphar that 'the Lord was with him' (v 3)?

1b. What relevance, if any, does Joseph's witness to Potiphar have for us some thousands of years later?

1c. What do you make of Potiphar's wife, and her relationship with Joseph? What do you think drove her to act as she did? Have you met a 'Potiphar's wife' in your life?

1d. Some people who have no faith in God can and do have personal integrity. What could be the reasons for their integrity if they are only ultimately accountable to themselves?

2. We have read of Joseph's unjust sending to prison, and most of us will know of the betrayal by his brothers (Genesis 37) which resulted in his being sold into slavery. Two severe setbacks that would test anyone's faith.

2a. Most of us have setbacks in our lives, both severe and some less so. There is no record of Joseph's faith ever faltering. What do you recall of your feelings and faith following a setback?

2b. Looking back, what did the setbacks do to your faith? Is it stronger or weaker now as a result?

2c. If (like me) you faltered, did you try to pick up yourself without help, or to whom or where did you turn for help?

Read Hebrews 10: 11-25 & Jeremiah 29: 11

3. The opening verses of this passage make clear that Jesus' sacrificial death terminated the Old Testament sacrificial requirements; God was introducing something new, just as he had promised.

3a. There is approximately 800 years between Jeremiah's prophesy and Jesus' death (say 15 generations). God always keeps his promises but can choose to work in a different time scale than we might choose. What sort of implications does this have for us today?

4. Jesus' supreme offering on the cross was of such immense value and worth that for those who 'hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess' (v 23), we are cleansed 'from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water' (v 22).

4a. Read again verses 24 & 25. Apparently, we should 'spur one another on' and 'encourage one another'. If Christ has done so much for us we shouldn't need this, or should we?