

VIEW FROM THE TOP: "BUT GOD INTENDED IT"

Genesis 50

THEME: SOVEREIGNTY

Preparation by Prevailing Prayer

Pray, Read, Pray, Study, Pray: Try to set aside a regular time for preparation and study. Then simply use that time to the best of your ability. The Christian life is always a matter of balance. Prayer and preparation produce results for the Kingdom. Preparation to lead a Bible lesson in the Body of Christ must not, however, provide an excuse to keep you from carrying out your regular, God-given responsibilities. The Lord has given you many uses for your time and gifts in this life, each of which must be seen in light of its peculiar biblical priority. Therefore, decide on the appropriate amount of time for preparation according to the "time of your life" and your responsibilities. Then use that time wisely, joyfully, and without guilt. Turn the whole procedure over to the Lord. You are seeking to lead His people into a clearer understanding of His Word. It is His project. Do your best, considering all the desires He has for your life; He will bless.

Pray for specifics. The whole process is front-line spiritual warfare. Spiritual weapons prevail.

Working through the Discussion Questions

Whether you've marked your Bible or not, cap off your personal reading and studying by working through the discussion questions. Here are a few insights that may be of help:

- Q. 4b:** There are probably a couple of good answers to this one. First, Pharaoh had grown to appreciate Joseph's character and truthfulness. In addition, however, Joseph was leaving his children and wealth in Egypt, something Moses and the people would not agree to do at a later date!
- Q. 5a:** Joseph believed in the promises of God.
- Q. 6b:** I would know that a practice run had been accomplished before.
- Q. 7:** The land did not yet belong to Israel and his progeny, except by promise. All but a very small fraction was firmly in the hands of the heathen clans of Canaan.
- Q. 10:** I'm not sure of the answer to this one. It certainly would be convenient for the brothers to lie at this point.
- Q. 12a:** Forgiveness.
- Q. 12b:** No other way!

Q. 13 end: (What did God intend?) He intended, at least in part, for His glory to shine forth in mortal man.

Q. 15: The word "sovereign" is beginning to have its meaning "watered down" in modern American English. You may wish to discuss the changes in its connotation so as to be able to consider the biblical truth of God's sovereignty, as seen in this 50:20 key verse and throughout Scripture.

Going through these questions—especially if you get to questions 13–15—can possibly issue in a very special and maybe life-changing prayer time. If you are dealing with a group that is not ready to warm up to such an exercise on the first lesson, you may try to return to this set of questions (9–15) at a carefully chosen point later on in the series of lessons. Helping a friend move from a desire for revenge (the answer to Q.9) to a gentle resting in the sovereignty of the Lord is a wonderful gift and ministry.

Preparation of Practicalities

MEMORY VERSE CARDS: You want each member of the group to have a memory verse card for Genesis 50:20, so they will be able to tape it to their mirror, stick it to the refrigerator, or hang it over the kitchen sink. We'll take a page from the Navigators' notebook, for they are experts in encouraging Scripture memory.

The card should have a "Topic" in the upper left-hand corner. The topic could be "GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY" or "VIEW FROM THE TOP" or "KEY VERSE FOR JOSEPH." The topic should be a convenient "handle" to make it easy for them to return to the truth of these powerful words when the need arises in their own lives or in the lives of their loved ones.

Under the topic, the reference should be written. Then simply copy the verse from your Bible. In the lower right-hand corner of the card, re-write the reference. In all recitation and practice, the topic, the reference, the verse, and the reference again should be given in that order. It works!

HOW TO GET THE MEMORY CARDS MADE: You could write them out ahead of time. You could run them off on a computer or an office copier. I would suggest that you let each lady make her own, right there in the Bible study. Just provide the materials.

HOW TO TEACH THE MEMORY VERSE: I would suggest the tried and true "Disappearing Verse Trick." If you have a chalk board, white dry-erase marker board, flip chart, or even a piece of meat-wrapping paper you could tape to the mantelpiece, use something like that. If you are working with a group of two or three around a table, you could use a piece of notebook paper. Of course, an overhead projector works best. If you cannot figure any "central" way to have the memory verse held before the group, then give each person *two* note cards, one to take home for the mirror and the other to destroy through this learning process in the meeting.

Now... have the group *read* the memory verse aloud together: topic, reference, verse, and reference again. Turn to the person on your left and ask them to pick out a word or number. Mark out that word or number on your display. (If each student has their own note card, have everyone scratch out the chosen word beyond recognition.) Read the verse aloud for the second time, supplying the scratched-out word now from memory! Ask the second person on your left to supply another word or number, and repeat the process. Continue until nothing is left on the board or on the cards. When the group "reads" the verse the final time, it will be from memory!

This *takes time*, but I believe it to be well worth the effort. In the midst of laughter, it completely overcomes the defense that "I can't memorize." Each participant is well on the way to success by the time your chart becomes an unrelieved mess!

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Blame this whole procedure on me. Let your group know that you are "only following the teacher's guide!" I have tried this approach with all age groups and in many, many situations. It always develops interest, laughter, and amazement. If you stumble over part of the verse, don't worry. It will only cause your group to enjoy the process more.

SINGING (OR READING WORDS TO SONGS): You may find singing to be a good beginning and/or ending exercise. For Lesson One, two appropriate songs would be:

"Come Thou Fount of Ev'ry Blessing" and

"My Lord Knows the Way through the Wilderness: (All I Have to Do is Follow)."

In "Come Thou Fount," you will want to emphasize the Eben-ezer imagery. "Eben" means "stone of;" "ezer" means "help." (The reference is to 1 Samuel 7:12.)

HELPFUL CATECHISM QUESTIONS:

CC Q. 3: *Why did God make you and all things?*

A.: For his own glory.

CC Q.12: *Does God know all things?*

A.: Yes; nothing can be hid from God.

CC Q.13: *Can God do all things?*

A.: Yes; God can do all his holy will.

WSC Q. 1: *What is the chief end of man?*

A.: Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

WSC Q. 7: *What are the decrees of God?*

A.: The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

WSC Q. 8: *How doth God execute His decrees?*

A.: God executeth his decrees in the works of creation and providence.

HELPFUL RESEARCH MATERIAL: *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, by Jay E. Adams, a book dealing with the important difference between shuffling your feet, mumbling "Sorry," and asking forgiveness for clearly admitted sin.

HELPFUL QUOTE: Henry Elrod was clerk of session at Second Presbyterian Church in Greenville, S.C., during much of the time I worked with the youth of the congregation. Just prior to each morning worship service, Henry would close our prayer time with the same words. He would entreat the Lord, "And at last, save us and receive us into heaven, for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son." Over a period of months and years, Henry lifted my eyes from the next devotional at the gym or the next youth retreat to a very long range "view from the top." I owe much to his example; I look forward to joining him again, by God's grace, at the Summit.