



Joseph's life is covered in commentaries on Genesis and separately in these writings:

- Ellsworth, Roger (2011); ***Joseph – Encountering the man who saved his people***; Leominster, Day One Publications; 102 pages
Each of the sixteen chapters of this short but valuable book concludes with a list of three passages “for further study” and three questions “to think about and discuss”.
- Goligher, Liam (revised edition, 2011); ***Joseph: The Hidden Hand of God***; Fearn, Tain, Ross-shire, Christian Focus Publications; 240 pages
"The story of Joseph is a great symphony on the theme of God's providence. But a symphony can only be brought to life by a skilled expert... Enter Liam Goligher and we know the music is in safe hands. In his hands the Joseph Symphony intrigues, delights, and captivates our hearts for God and his ways and fills us with admiration for his wise providence. Here is a book to put melody into the way we live the Christian life."
Dr Sinclair B. Ferguson
- Kendall, R.T. (second edition 1990); ***God meant it for good***; Carlisle, Paternoster Press; 235 pages; other editions are available
This book is an edited condensation into 37 short chapters of 49 sermons on the life of Joseph. The original sermons were preached in 1982/3 at Westminster Chapel.
- Searle, David C. (2012); ***Joseph – His Arms Were Made Strong***; Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust; 268 pages
This excellent book, based on a sermon series, shows how very strategic was the life of Joseph in God's plan of salvation, how he prefigured the Lord Jesus Christ in so many ways, and how the Lord's people should live *in* the world without being *of* the world.

But God meant it for good!

lessons for today from the life of Joseph

The remarkable life of Joseph is recorded in Genesis 37–50 and referred to also in Psalm 105:16–23, Acts 7:9–16 and Hebrews 11:21–22. Full of human interest, it relates as much to the family of God's chosen people as it does to Joseph himself. His brothers never quite got over the fact that they had sold him into slavery as a teenager but, looking back over an eventful life, Joseph was able to reassure them with these words, uttered about seventeen years apart:

“God sent me before you to preserve life... So it was not you who sent me here, *but God*. He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.”
Genesis 45:5–8

“As for you, you meant evil against me, *but God* meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive...”
Genesis 50:20

The simple words “but God” are actually profound and speak volumes about the providence of God. This great theme is echoed throughout Scripture, which has its focus in the wonderful plan of salvation devised and effected by God and fulfilled in the person and by the work of Jesus Christ. Clearly Joseph foreshadowed Jesus – in the language of theology, he was a *type* of Christ – and many parallels can be drawn between his life and that of Jesus. Note, from Genesis 37:2–4 alone, that:

- Joseph was a shepherd, as was Jesus (John 10:11);
- Joseph exposed evil, as did Jesus (John 7:7);
- Joseph was loved by his father, as was Jesus (Mark 1:11, 9:7; John 10:17);
- Joseph was hated by his brothers, as was Jesus (John 3:20, 15:18, 15:24).

Joseph was the eleventh of his father's twelve sons, though the first to be borne by Rachel, Jacob's favourite wife, perhaps in the year 1914 BC. Sold into slavery at the age of seventeen (Genesis 37:2), Joseph was later imprisoned for well over two years (Genesis 40:1, 41:1) and was not released until his sudden appointment to Pharaoh's service at the age of thirty (Genesis 41:46).

There followed seven years of plenty (Genesis 41:47ff) and seven years of famine. When the famine affected Canaan, Jacob sent some of his sons to Egypt to buy food (Genesis 41:53–42:5), so Joseph was probably 38 years old when next he saw his brothers, and 39 when they were forced to return to Egypt for a second time (Genesis 43). The famine had lasted for two years before Joseph revealed himself (Genesis 45:6) and urged his brothers to bring the whole family to Egypt.

Jacob lived in Egypt for seventeen years (Genesis 47:28), so Joseph was 56 years old when his father died, after which he himself lived for a further 54 years (Genesis 50:22). Joseph died in Egypt, but eventually – about four hundred years later – was buried in Canaan (Genesis 50:24–26; Exodus 13:19; Joshua 24:32).

1. **Genesis 37:1–11** **Spoilt for choice?** 11 April
These verses introduce Jacob and his family, and explore various home truths about Jacob and Joseph, Joseph and his brothers, and Joseph and his dreams.
2. **Genesis 37:12–36** **Going, going, gone!** 18 April
Joseph's life is spared by his brothers, though they sell him into distant slavery. Jacob is deceived into thinking that Joseph has been killed by a wild animal.
3. **Genesis 39:1–20** **Testing times** 25 April
In Egypt, Joseph knows the presence of the Lord and so enjoys great success. He is tempted by Potiphar's wife, who accuses him of the very sin that she herself committed. As a result of her false accusations, Joseph is imprisoned.
4. **Genesis 39:21–40:23** **Out of sight and out of mind?** 2 May
Joseph continues to know God's presence, even though he is in prison. After some time, Joseph is enabled by God to interpret the dreams of two significant fellow prisoners. They are released, but Joseph remains locked up.
5. **Genesis 41:1–32** **A dream assignment** 9 May
Pharaoh is troubled by two vivid dreams which none of his many advisers can interpret. Joseph, rushed into the royal presence, reveals in detail the meaning of the dreams – but not before giving God full credit for being able to do so.
6. **Genesis 41:33–57** **A man for all seasons** 16 May
Joseph proposes to Pharaoh a plan to ensure that Egypt had food enough to last through the seven years of famine. He is promptly appointed to implement that plan, and given authority second only to Pharaoh himself. He works diligently and successfully in the land of Egypt, but never forgets the God of Israel.
7. **Genesis 42** **A family visit** 23 May
Because of the famine, Jacob sends ten of his sons to Egypt to buy food. Joseph recognises his brothers at once, but they do not recognise him. Unwittingly, they fulfil Joseph's teenage dreams by bowing down before him.
Joseph imprisons Simeon but, to their great perplexity and dismay, sends his other brothers home with full bags of grain and all the money they had paid for it. Jacob is greatly exercised by the thought of Benjamin having to go to Egypt.
8. **Genesis 43** **Honoured guests** 30 May
The famine is so severe that Jacob has to send his sons back to Egypt to buy more food. They take gifts as well as money, and this time Benjamin goes with them. The brothers are amazed when they are invited to dine grandly in Joseph's house, still not appreciating his close relationship to them.
9. **Genesis 44** **The silver cup** 6 June
Joseph tests his brothers by placing his silver cup in Benjamin's sack and noting their reaction when this is discovered. Gone were the hatred and the jealousy, the plotting and deceit, the callous indifference to Jacob's feelings.
10. **Genesis 45** **You, me and God** 13 June
Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and reassures them: "it was not you who sent me here, but God." He urges them to go home but return promptly with their families, flocks and father so that they can settle in Goshen – that part of the Nile delta which Pharaoh himself called "the best of all the land of Egypt". Joseph's invitation is underlined by Pharaoh's joy at hearing of the arrival of Joseph's brothers, and his offer of wagons to help with the family's move.
11. **Genesis 46:1–47:12** **God's gracious provision** 20 June
The family of God's people move down to Egypt but, on the way, stop to offer sacrifices at Beersheba. There God speaks to Jacob – known also as Israel and by then 130 years old – and assures him that he is right to move to Egypt.
Joseph presents five of his brothers, and his father, to Pharaoh. Pharaoh confirms his welcome, Jacob blesses Pharaoh and the family settle in Goshen.
12. **Genesis 47:13–26** **At work** 27 June
In later Old Testament history, Daniel's enemies found no reasonable grounds for complaint against him "because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent." (Daniel 6:4, NIV) The same could have been said of Joseph, who proves his ability at work and gains huge respect for it.
13. **Genesis 47:27–48:22** **By faith** 4 July
"By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff." (Hebrews 11:21)
14. **Genesis 49:1–28** **What will happen?** 11 July
Jacob, at the end of his long life, tells his sons what will happen to them and their respective families, each of which had a distinct destiny ordained by God. Jacob's lengthiest and most eloquent blessing is reserved for Joseph.
15. **Genesis 49:29–50:14** **Dead and buried** 18 July
Jacob dies and is mourned by both his family and the Egyptians. A very great company goes to bury him at Mamre, a couple of miles north of Hebron.
16. **Genesis 50:15–26** **God's glorious providence** 25 July
Joseph had learned to leave the righting of his wrongs to God, and his future in the hands of God. He would die, but God's promises would not die with him.