UPC Family Devotional

November – Week 2

Memory Verse of the Week:

“But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.”

-Genesis 45:7

Nov 7 Monday Genesis 44:1-13

Joseph devices another round of testing for his brothers. He places his cup in‘s sack because he wishes to see how the brothers will react when the cup is discovered. Joseph has cleverly set up a situation that mirrors the circumstances that led to his brothers selling him into slavery - will they abandon Benjamin the way they abandoned Joseph? God will sometimes test us in a similar manner. We may feel discouraged when we face the same temptation or struggle over again, but it is only through such tests that we can see whether we have truly repented and grown in our faith. When we overcome a trial that stumbled us in the past, our lives become a testimony to God's transforming power.

What have your recent trials revealed about your heart? How has God transformed you through your trials?

The brothers are rightly devastated to discover the silver cup in Benjamin’s sack. They tear their clothes in deep lament and return to the city to face the consequences. Through this entire ordeal, Joseph's hope is that his brothers will show that they regret their past mistakes and have learned of sense of loyalty and love toward their family. Joseph doesn't know it yet, but this family unity will become essential in later years as the nation of Israel grows and settles among pagan peoples. We may not think that the small, everyday decisions we make for our family will have a wide impact, but God may have greater plans. Let us ask Him to help us see the bigger picture and live according to this vision.

When have you seen seemingly significant decisions make a big impact later on? How can you gain a prouder outlook for your life, calling, and purpose?

Nov 8 Tuesday Genesis 44:14-34

Now that Joseph demands that Benjamin be punished for stealing his cup, it is time for Judah to make good on the promise he made to his father. Judah displays commendable boldness and humility as he retells the events that have brought them to this situation. He puts his life at risk by stepping up to share his story in the hopes that he will receive mercy. In doing so, he shows Joseph how much he has changed. Judah's speech is a reminder to us of the power of telling one's story. And we share our testimony in an honest and authentic manner, we might be surprised at how our story softens the hearts of even those who seem staunchly opposed to our beliefs.

How has God used your story to help you connect with other people and to share the gospel? Ask God for more opportunities to share your testimony with others.

Judah tells Joseph that his aging father will die if Benjamin is not brought back to him. He goes on to explain that he promised his father he would bear the blame for the rest of his life if he did not return Benjamin safely and then offers himself as a substitute; he is willing to be enslaved in Benjamin’s place. In Judah’s willingness to become a substitutionary sacrifice to save his family from ruin, we are a reminded of his descendant - our Lord Jesus Christ - who gave up his life in our place so that we would be saved. Jesus took the punishment that we deserve so that we might be free to serve the Lord with joy and power.

What do you think motivated Judah to offer to take Benjamin’s punishment? What motivated Jesus to give Himself up on the cross?

Nov 9 Wednesday Genesis 45:1-15

Unable to contain his emotion any longer, Joseph bursts into tears and reveals his true identity. He is deeply moved not only by the presence of his brothers and his longing to see his father, but also by the realization that the sovereign hand of God has been working in his life for the salvation of his family. Everything he has experienced up to this moment, culminating in Judah’s offer to sacrifice himself to save Benjamin, is evidence that God loves his family and has a special plan for them. Take time today to reflect on the ways God has used your life to bring His salvation to others and allow your heart to be moved by His wondrous love.

Ask God for spiritual insight so that you can become more aware of His presence and work in your life. As He reveals Himself to you, respond with praise.

Joseph's forgiveness toward his brother's extends far beyond simply pardoning them for their past crimes against him. He promises to provide for their households, allowing them to share in the privileges he has earned in Egypt. Furthermore, he kisses all his brothers and weeps over them, a sign of deep and genuine affection. It is hard to believe that Joseph is able to love the brothers who treated him so cruelly, but his understanding of God's greater purposes empowers him to forgive his family. If you are having a hard time forgiving someone who has hurt you, surrender your heart to God. Ask him to help you see his plans amid your pain and to give you the strength to forgive.

Meditate on the forgiveness you have received from God and pray that he would give you the heart to love your enemies.

Nov 10 Thursday Genesis 45:16-28

Pharaoh and his attendants are pleased to welcome Jacob’s family with the best that Egypt offers. Although they are foreigners, Pharaoh has seen the great blessings that Joseph has brought to the people of Egypt and he naturally expects that Joseph's family will be a blessing too. When the people of God bring peace and prosperity to the places where we sojourn, we will find that those around us will be more welcoming toward the church and our faith. It might take some time, and we may face hostility at first, but God's love empowers us to be faithful even amid the evil around us. May we continue to do good to all as we live as the salt and light of this world.

When have you been pleasantly surprised by the attitude of unbelievers toward the church? What small steps can you take to be salt and light in your community?

Joseph's generosity toward his family, especially Benjamin and his father, reveals his great affection for them. After all the suffering he has endured, Joseph could have easily enjoyed a life of privilege and comfort in Egypt and forgotten his family. He does not owe them a single thing, yet it seems he wants to give them the world. His extravagant love reflects the heart of our father, who not only provides us with everything we need but gives us blessing upon blessing out of his abundant affection. This is the kind of love we should aim to show others, especially fellow believers. When we go out of our way to love the people of God, we demonstrate to the world that we are truly Jesus’ disciples.

How does God's love for you inspire you to be generous toward others? Can you show extravagant love towards fellow believers?

Nov 11 Friday Genesis 46:1-7

As Jacob begins his journey, God speaks to him and tells him not to be afraid. Whereas Abraham and Isaac were discouraged from departing from the land of Canaan and seeking solace in Egypt, the Lord gives Jacob express permission to take his family there. God promises to be with him and to make him into a great nation, even in Egypt. Jacob has no idea what kind of future awaits his family or how God will bring them back to the promised land, but he has learned to trust God to fulfill His promises. He will sometimes call us to leave the comfort of the familiar and take our family into new, potentially hostile territory. But He never sends us alone - he goes with us and protects us with His presence.

When have you felt God leading you to an unfamiliar place? How has he used uncomfortable circumstances to develop your faith and character?

Jacob leaves Canaan with his entire family and all his possessions, with no intention of returning any time soon. He takes a true step of faith, uprooting everything to start a new life in Egypt where his family can escape the harsh realities of the famine. There may be times when we will need to make significant changes to our lives for very practical reasons like financial difficulty or an illness in the family. While such a change might feel like an unwanted interruption or an inconvenient detour, we must remember that God is not in a rush to fulfill His plans for us. He has a purpose for every circumstance, so let us patiently keep in step with Him and continue walking with Him.

How have detours and interruptions to your plans brought unexpected blessings? What helps you to cling to God when life takes a turn for the worse?

Nov 12 Saturday Genesis 46:8-27

The author of Genesis gives a comprehensive list of Jacob’s descendants that go to Egypt with him. It is important to note that the list repeatedly ties each descendant back to Jacob; whether referring to the children of his wives and the concubines or the children of his sons, the offspring are named as the sons and daughters of Jacob. Henceforth, this group of people is called Israel - a name that represents the covenant people of God. The New Testament affirms that we, too, are part of this covenant family - not by physical ancestry but by spiritual heritage. As believers in the Messiah, we have been chosen by God and adopted into His family. We are eternally united with Him through His spirit who dwells within us.

Reflect on your spiritual heritage. How has God been at work in your family through the generations?

The total number of Jacob’s children who have settled in Egypt is said to be seventy in all. This is a symbolic number that represents completeness and anticipates that this large family will one day become a great nation. At the opposite end of the Bible, we find another symbolic number used in relation to Israel. The Book of Revelation states that 144,000 are sealed from each of the tribes of Israel (Rev. 7:4). This number represents the complete number of believers that make up the body of Christ. The actual number will be a vast multitude of people that the Lord will save on the last day. Until then, let us continue the work of bringing more people into the household of God.

Whom do you want to invite into the household of God? Pray for them today, that God would open their heart to the gospel.