

INTERACTIVE TEACHING/LEARNING GUIDE
Week 18

SESSION TITLE: "Patience: When God Seems Slow"

FOCAL PASSAGE: (Genesis 39:1- 41:40)

Central Teaching/Learning Aim: To help the learner develop spiritual patience and perseverance in order to faithfully serve the Lord.

I. Creating Interest in the Series (Hook)

A. Display the following using power point or write on the marker board:

Instant Messaging
E-bay
A credit card
Google

The Lottery
Headline News
Text Messaging

Ask - What do these items have in common?

State - They all provide instant gratification.

Ask - How patient are you? How patient are you when you pray? Do you want an answer immediately?

Next – Overview the major points of today's scripture passage.

State – In today's passage we see how Joseph had to endure a great deal and rely on his faith to patiently wait for deliverance and we will discuss how sometimes we must do the same.

B. Optional Method – Share the following information from an article in the Dallas Morning News, May 4, 2005:

Patient: 'How long have I been away?'

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. – Nearly 9 ½ years after a firefighter was left brain-damaged and mostly mute during a 1995 roof collapse, he did something that shocked his family and doctors: He asked for his wife.

Staff members of the nursing home where Donald Herbert has lived for more than seven years raced to get Linda Herbert on the telephone.

It was the first of many conversations the patient had with his wife, four sons and other family and friends Saturday during a 14-hour stretch, Mr. Herbert's uncle, Simon Manka, said.

"How long have I been away?" Mr. Herbert asked.

"We told him almost 10 years," the uncle said. "He thought it was only three months."

Mr. Herbert, who will turn 44 Saturday, was fighting a house fire Dec. 29, 1995, when the roof collapsed, burying him under debris. After going without air for several minutes, Mr. Herbert was comatose for 2 ½ months and has undergone therapy since. "He stayed up till early morning talking with his boys and catching up on what they've been doing over the last several years," firefighter Anthony Liberatore told WIVB-TV.

Mr. Herbert's sons were 14, 13, 11 and 3 when he was injured.

Staff members at the nursing facility recognized the change in Mr. Herbert, Mr. Manka said, when they heard him speaking and "making specific requests."

"The word of the day was 'amazing,' " he said.

Ask – If you were Mr. Herbert's wife or one of his sons, how long do you think you would have held on in the hope that he might wake up?

How would you categorize yourself in the area of patience?

Hurry up already

Mildly impatient

Patient

How patient are you in your prayer life?

Next – Share the main highlights of today's passage. Emphasize Joseph's need for patience.

State – In today's passage we see how Joseph had to endure a great deal and rely on his faith to patiently wait for deliverance and we will discuss how sometimes we must do the same.

C. Optional Method – Movie Clip “Planes, Trains & Automobiles”

Start: 2:53

Stop: 4:14

Synopsis: “Trains, Planes and Automobiles” stars Steve Martin and John Candy. Steve Martin portrays a man determined to get home for Thanksgiving despite a tremendous snowstorm. In a scene near the beginning of the movie he is seen racing through the streets competing with another person for a taxi. This is the first of repeated mishaps in his attempt to get home.

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II. Book

A. Utilize the discussion guide to examine the Scripture passages.

III. Look

A. Distribute the handout “Waiting with God” and guide members to complete it. (NOTE: This would be an excellent group activity.)

B. Optional Method – Distribute the group assignments which deal with character studies on patience and have members discuss.

IV. Took

A. Share – the following humorous story:

A priest, a doctor, and an engineer were waiting one morning for a particularly slow group of golfers. The engineer asked, “What’s with these guys? We must have been waiting for 15 minutes.” The doctor agreed: “I’ve never seen such slow golfers.” The pastor noted, “Hey, here comes the groundskeeper. Let’s have a word with him.” The pastor called out to the groundskeeper, “Say, George, what’s with the group ahead of us?” George said, “That’s the group of blind firefighters. They lost their sight saving our clubhouse from a fire last year, so we

always let them play for free anytime." The group was silent for a moment. The pastor sympathized, "That's so sad. I think I'll say a special prayer for them tonight." The doctor added, "That's a good idea. In fact, I'm going to contact my ophthalmologist buddy and see if we can do anything for these guys." Then the engineer spoke up: "Well that's great, but in the meantime, why can't these guys play at night?"

Charles Lowery, "Laugh Lines Heart or Head?" *Home Life* (April 2000), p.65

Ask – Are you like the impatient engineer? Do you need to develop spiritual patience? This week develop persistent, patience in your spiritual life.

Are there prayer requests that you have given up on? Do you need to faithfully serve God while waiting on new direction?

Close in prayer.

B. Optional Method – Create a time capsule.

Bring a box or container of some kind. Distribute index cards or strips of paper to each member. Ask any who would like to write down one specific prayer request. They can place their name on it if they would like. Tell them that you will ask them to prayer fully place their request in the prayer time capsule. Challenge them to pray for this request everyday for the next month. In one month, the prayer time capsule will be opened to see how God has answered the requests. This will teach perseverance and persistence in our prayer lives.

Close in prayer.

DISCUSSION GUIDE
(Teacher's Copy)

1. List the evidence of God at work in the life of Joseph in the following passages.
 - a. (Gen. 39:1) Joseph sold into the house of Potiphar, a powerful official.
 - b. (2-6a) Joseph placed in leadership over Potiphar's estate.
 - c. (20-23) Joseph given leadership role in prison.
 - d. (40:1-8) Joseph assigned to attend to Pharaoh's butler & baker.
 - e. (41:9-36) Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream.
 - f. (37-57) Joseph placed in charge of Egypt's welfare.

2. What emotions or thoughts do you think Joseph must have experienced after being forgotten in prison for 2 years? (Gen. 40:23-41:1)

3. How patient are you in your spiritual life? Do you want answers to your prayers immediately? Do you want God to open doors instantly?

4. What did Pharaoh say to Joseph, and how did he respond? (41:15-16)
(Pharaoh said he had heard that Joseph could interpret dreams. Joseph gave God the credit for this gift.)

5. How do you glorify God with the gifts He has bestowed on you?

6. How did Pharaoh respond to Joseph's advice? (vs. 33-45)
(He placed Joseph into a leadership role which gave him incredible authority.)

7. What principals of success can you learn from Joseph's "climb to the top"?

8. How has God opened or closed doors in your life? What significant people has He used?

9. Are you serving God faithfully where He has placed you? If not, what do you need to change?

DISCUSSION GUIDE
(Student's Copy)

1. List the evidence of God at work in the life of Joseph in the following passages.

a. (Gen. 39:1)

b. (2-6a)

c. (20-23)

d. (40:1-8)

e. (41:9-36)

f. (37-57)

2. What emotions or thoughts do you think Joseph must have experienced after being forgotten in prison for 2 years? (Gen. 40:23-41:1)

3. How patient are you in your spiritual life? Do you want answers to your prayers immediately? Do you want God to open doors instantly?

4. What did Pharaoh say to Joseph, and how did he respond? (41:15-16)

5. How do you glorify God with the gifts He has bestowed on you?

6. How did Pharaoh respond to Joseph's advice? (vs. 33-45)

7. What principals of success can you learn from Joseph's "climb to the top"?

8. How has God opened or closed doors in your life? What significant people has He used?

9. Are you serving God faithfully where He has placed you? If not, what do you need to change?

Waiting with God

Work through the following self-evaluations to determine if you need to develop more patience with the Lord and learn how to be patient.

I. **Waiting on the Lord is an act of obedience**

Read (Romans 8:23-25)

a. God commands us to wait on Him.

How do you wait on God? _____

b. Waiting is not irresponsibility.

How can waiting be viewed as irresponsibility? _____

How can excessive waiting turn into irresponsibility? _____

What can you do while waiting on God for answered prayer? _____

II. **Waiting on the Lord requires a trusting heart.**

a. Waiting requires patience.

How patient are you on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being terribly impatient and 10 being extremely patient? _____

When have you lost patience with God? _____

Losing patience with God demonstrates the lack of remembering all of the blessings and provisions He has given. Make a list of God's blessings on your life. _____

b. Waiting requires confident humility.

How confident are you that God provides? (Circle one)

Not confident *Somewhat confident* *Confident* *Always confident*

How can your confidence improve? _____

c. Waiting requires inextinguishable hope.

Where does your hope lie? _____

What causes you to doubt your hopes? _____

What strengthens your hope? _____

Group #1 – Read (Genesis 26:15-22)

1. Who showed patience in this story?
 2. How did the character show patience?
 3. How did God reward their patience?
 4. What makes you impatient? Have each group member share.
 5. When have you been impatient with God?
 6. How can we stay patient even in times of trial?
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Group #2 – Read (Exodus 16:7-14)

1. Who showed patience in this story?
 2. How did the character show patience?
 3. How did God reward their patience?
 4. What makes you impatient? Have each group member share.
 5. When have you been impatient with God?
 6. How can we stay patient even in times of trial?
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Group #3 – Read (Job 1:13-22)

1. Who showed patience in this story?
 2. How did the character show patience?
 3. How did God reward their patience?
 4. What makes you impatient? Have each group member share.
 5. When have you been impatient with God?
 6. How can we stay patient even in times of trial?
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Group #4 – Read (Psalm 40:1-3)

1. Who showed patience in this story?
2. How did the character show patience?
3. How did God reward their patience?
4. What makes you impatient? Have each group member share.
5. When have you been impatient with God?
6. How can we stay patient even in times of trial?

Group #5– Read (Luke 2:25-34)

1. Who showed patience in this story?
 2. How did the character show patience?
 3. How did God reward their patience?
 4. What makes you impatient? Have each group member share.
 5. When have you been impatient with God?
 6. How can we stay patient even in times of trial?
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Group #6– Read (I Peter 2:21-25)

1. Who showed patience in this story?
2. How did the character show patience?
3. How did God reward their patience?
4. What makes you impatient? Have each group member share.
5. When have you been impatient with God?
6. How can we stay patient even in times of trial?

THE Word For The Week

Genesis 44:1-34

“Recovery: Who Can Come Back Home”

Monday – Read Genesis 44:1-34

- What is the issue facing Jacob and his sons?
- Why are they in this situation?
- Do you ever find it difficult to confront the problem before you, or do you find it easier to do nothing and hope it will go away? What usually happens?
- Think on areas of your life where you need to be honest and obedient with yourself and others.

Tuesday – Read Genesis 44:1-34

- Contrast the maturity of Judah with Genesis 37:26-27; Genesis 38; and Genesis 43:3-10.
- Just as we see the mature growth and solid recovery from past sins, can I see the mature growth and recovery from my past sins?
- Am I growing spiritually day to day?
- Pray and ask God to help you grow spiritually strong.

Wednesday – Read Genesis 44:1-34

- Are Joseph’s motives pure or is he getting even for what his brothers did to him?
- Why is Joseph making Benjamin the key to all that is going on?
- If we are to make a full recovery in our lives, then all the evil things we have done must surface. Sometimes we need encouragement to come clean.

Thursday – Read Genesis 44:1-34

- Why is it so hard to return and restore our lives when we have been disobedient to the Lord?
- We fight against restoration and surrendering but when we do yield and let God lead, and direct the return becomes abundant and sweet.
- What is God asking you to give up or yield to Him?
- Will you do it?

Friday – Read Genesis 44:1-34

- Joseph was an interpreter of dreams – he interpreted the dreams of the baker in (Gen. 40:16), the cupbearer in (Gen. 40:9) and Pharaoh in (Gen. 41:14).
- God’s hand was on Joseph in all he did – the first dream he interpreted was now coming true. Go back and read (Gen. 37:5-11)
- Seek God and be obedient to all He asks you to do.

Ancient/Future - A Journey through Genesis

"Patience: When God Seems Slow"

Genesis 39:1-41:57

(Exegetical . . . What it meant to Israel back THEN)

**THE LORD'S PRESENCE/PROSPERITY IN JOSEPH'S CIRCUMSTANCES
WHETHER AS A SLAVE OF POTIPHAR OR A PRISONER OF PHARAOH, AND
WHETHER JUSTLY PROMOTED TO LEADERSHIP OR
FALSELY ACCUSED OF WICKEDNESS,
MOTIVATED JOSEPH TO HONOR GOD THROUGH SUFFERING
EVEN WHEN HIS GOD-GIVEN ABILITIES WERE FORGOTTEN,
AND TO SERVE GOD'S GREATER PLAN WHEN GIVEN POWER.**

- I. The Lord's presence with and prosperity in Joseph's circumstances whether as a slave in Potiphar's house or a prisoner in Pharaoh's prison house, and whether justly promoted to leadership or falsely accused of wickedness motivated Joseph to honor God through suffering [and moved him into position to be the source of blessing for Egypt and Israel], (39:1-23).
 - A. The rest of the story: Joseph's being "taken down" (see Psalm 22:29; Isaiah 5:14; Jonah 2:6 - a death) to Egypt by the Ishmaelites, after being sold as a slave by his brothers, had resulted in his being sold into the house of Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's most powerful officials, (1).
 - B. The Lord's presence with and prosperity in Joseph's circumstances as a slave to Potiphar caused Potiphar to place Joseph in charge of his entire estate which in turn caused the lord to bless Potiphar's entire estate because of Potiphar's blessing Joseph with leadership, (2-6a).
 - C. The complication: Joseph's physical appearance was appealing, (6b).
 - D. Joseph's commitment to the God who blessed him motivated Joseph to refuse the repeated attempts of Potiphar's wife to sexually seduce him, resulting in his being falsely accused by her and thrown into prison by Potiphar, (7-20a).
 - E. The Lord's presence with and prosperity in Joseph's circumstances as a prisoner in Pharaoh's prison caused the warden to place Joseph in charge of the entire prison, (20b-23).
- II. Joseph's appeal to be remembered and shown kindness based on his God-given ability to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker as well as the past injustices done to him was not remembered, but rather forgotten, (40:1-23).
 - A. Joseph's assignment was to attend Pharaoh's butler and baker who had been put into prison for gravely offending Pharaoh, (1-4a).
 - B. The dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker, which caused them to be dejected because there was no one to interpret the dreams, caused Joseph to offer to interpret the dreams since "interpretations belong to God." (4a-8).
 - C. Joseph's interpretation of the butler's dream promised the restoration of the butler to Pharaoh's court within three days, (9-13).
 - D. Joseph's request to be remembered to Pharaoh by the butler when he got out of prison was based on an appeal to loyal-kindness (hesed) and justice, (14-15).
 - E. Joseph's interpretation of the baker's dream promised the execution of the baker within three days, (16-19).

F. The interpretations of Joseph came true when, on Pharaoh's birthday, Pharaoh restored the butler to his court and executed the baker, (20-22).

G. Joseph's unjust imprisonment and interpretive ability were not remembered, but rather forgotten, by the butler, (23).

III. Joseph's ability to interpret dreams, to plan, and to lead, in response to the two dreams of Pharaoh which no one could interpret except Joseph who gave God credit for the revealing, interpreting, and fulfilling of dreams of revelation, enabled him to provide for Egypt's and the world's physical needs during the years of famine, (41:1-57).

Note: Two years had passed since Joseph had accurately interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker, but he had been forgotten in prison).

A. No one among Pharaoh's counselors could interpret the two dreams that troubled Pharaoh so much that he awoke twice in the same night, (1-8).

B. Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's two dreams, after the butler's sudden remembrance of Joseph's ability and the king's confidence in Joseph, revealed God's plan to bring seven years of prosperity and then seven years of famine to Egypt which would need to be prepared for by capable leadership and conservation, (9-36).

C. Joseph's ability to plan and lead, after his leadership abilities had been recognized, he had been placed in charge of Egypt's welfare, and his naming his sons testified to his faith, enabled him to provide for Egypt's and the world's physical needs during the famine years, (37-57).

**(Theological . . . What it means to believers ALWAYS)
GOD'S SOVEREIGN REVERSALS
THAT MOVE THE FAITHFUL THROUGH SUFFERING
PLACE THEM IN POSITIONS OF INFLUENCE
TO SERVE HIS PURPOSES.**

I. God's blessings upon suffering, yet faithful, leaders move them into influential positions, (39:1-23).

A. God's purposeful blessings move His faithful leaders into positions of influence, (39:1-6).

B. An awareness of God's ultimate authority motivates obedience in His leaders, (7-20).

C. God's renewed blessings move His faithful leaders into positions of renewed influence, (21-23).

II. Faithful leaders may pass tests of faith yet remain in challenging circumstances, (40:1-23).

A. God's faithful leaders may experience circumstances that challenge their perseverance in faith, (40:1-3).

B. Circumstances that challenge faithful leaders provide them opportunities to prove their faith, (4-19).

C. Faithful leaders may experience God's encouragement though they remain in challenging circumstances, (20-23).

- III. God's sovereign reversals of fortune enable faithful leaders to serve His purposes, (41:1-57).
 - A. God's revelations of His plans and purposes cannot be understood by unbelievers, (41:1-8).
 - B. God's faithful leaders possess the ability to make known God's plans and purposes, (9-36).
 - C. Reversals of fortune cannot distract God's faithful leaders from His service, (37-57).

(Pedagogical . . . What it means to us NOW)
SERVE FAITHFULLY AS YOU WAIT FOR GOD'S NEXT STEP.

- I. Keep your trust in God, (39:1-23).
 - A. You will sometimes suffer unjustly because you are a Christian leader, (37:36; 39:1).
 - B. God's blessings of presence and prosperity soften your suffering, (2-3).
 - C. God places you into positions of service as you are willing to suffer, (4-6).
 - D. Trusting God's ultimate authority keeps you from sinning when tempted, (7-12).
 - E. Your obedience may not secure an immediate reward, (13-20).
 - F. Keep your trust in God to place you where you can best serve Him, (21-23).
- II. Never second-guess God's timing, (40:1-23).
 - A. God's timing is not the same as our timing, (1-23).
 - B. Never second-guess God's timing.
- III. Faithfully serve God wherever He has placed you, (41:1-57)
 - A. God makes things happen, (1-7).
 - B. No one can understand God's plan without God's help, (8).
 - C. God's faithful servants tell of His plans and purposes, (17-36).
 - D. Faithfully serve God wherever He has placed you, (37-57).