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## **Leading God's People God's Way**

### ***Lesson 4: The Law of Process***

#### **Introduction**

This is Lesson 4 in our course called *Leading God's People God's Way*. We are in the process of learning how to grow in our leadership ability as we study the laws of leadership. In this lesson we will study the life of Joseph as we learn about the leadership Law of Process.

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Did you know that you don't just wake up one morning and decide to be a leader? There is no seminar or course that you can go to that will make you a leader in one day. Becoming a leader is a process which you must work on every day. Every day you must grow and change and become a better leader. That's the good news! No matter where you are today, you can grow and become a better leader.

As a teenager, Joseph had a divine dream. God revealed to him that he would one day have a significant leadership role. Even his older brothers would submit to him. However, years of preparation were required to get him ready. His early pride and immaturity had to be chiseled away, as he became a man worthy to live out those dreams. Joseph progressed from the pit to the prison to the palace – every location representing a growth step for him in the process. He was becoming the leader God intended for him to be. He was thirty years old when he became Pharaoh's assistant, the second most powerful man in the land. God took him through a process that enabled him to become a great leader.

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The Law of Process says this: **Leaders develop daily, not in a day.**

The key verse for this law is James 1:2-4, which says, <sup>2</sup>"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. <sup>4</sup>Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

The process of becoming a leader is a lot like the process of growing up from a child to a mature adult. When we are children we have to go to school so that we can learn the basic skills which will help us to get through life. Each year we have to write tests to see if we have learned what we were taught that year. If we pass the test, we can go to the next grade. But, if we fail the test, unfortunately, we have to stay in the same grade for another year.

In our key verse James talks about writing tests. He calls it facing trials, but it's really

the same thing. I don't know about you, but I don't like tests very much. In fact, I have not met many people who do. But, tests are a fact of life, and whether I like them or not, they will come, and I will have to pass them if I want to grow and mature as a person, and as a leader.

James is giving us a hint as to what our attitude should be when we face a test or a trial. Notice he does not say "if" you face a trial but "when". He knows that trials are going to come. They are inevitable. But, if we have the right attitude towards them, they can actually be something positive in our lives.

James says that we should be joyful when we face trials or tests. Wow! That's tough to do, don't you think? When we are facing a difficult time, James says we should count it all joy. Think about the last trial you faced. Was the first thing that came to your mind, "I need to be joyful now"? I know when I face a trial, that's not the first thing that comes to my mind. Usually I start complaining or having a bad attitude.

That's exactly why James tells us to be joyful. You see, he knows that if we are not joyful, we will probably be the opposite: grumpy, complaining and irritable. James knows that if we have a bad attitude, fear, doubt, and unbelief will not be far behind and we will begin to fail in the things God has called us to do.

If we can be joyful, however, we adopt an attitude of faith and belief in God. You see, Nehemiah 8:10 tells us that the joy of the Lord is our strength. That's why James tells us to be joyful. He knows that God's strength is present in our joy. The moment that we face a trial is exactly the moment that we need God's grace and strength to help us. That's why we must be joyful.

Now, notice the process that James gives us. Here's a summary of what he says:

- Trials will come.
- When they come we must be joyful.
- Trials test our faith and produce perseverance in us.
- Perseverance must finish its work for us to be complete and mature.

Do you see the process? Let's look at it from the other end. God's goal in our lives is for us to be complete and mature, not lacking anything. That's the end result that he desires. But how do we get there? Well, we need to persevere in the things of God. We need to walk by his Spirit and not according to our flesh. We need to choose to follow him daily and put to death our own desires. That takes perseverance. But how do we know if we have perseverance. Well, we will have to face trials along the way. The trials are not meant to trip us. They are meant to strengthen our faith and develop perseverance in us.

Let me use another example. Have you ever watched athletes competing in the Olympic Games? Not one athlete woke up the week before the Olympics and decided they were going to go and compete in the games? No, it doesn't work that way. There is a process that every athlete must go through before they can compete in the Olympic Games.

First of all, every athlete must be disciplined to train. No matter what sport they participate in, all have to train and practice and improve their skills to get to a level where they can compete in the Olympic Games. For many of them it takes years of dedicated practice to get to that level. This training is like going to school and learning the skills for life.

They have to compete in local, national and international sporting events. These are like tests. At these events they get to compete against other athletes in their sport. This is when they find out how good they really are. They can train every day for their entire lives, but if they enter a competition, they will never know if they have the ability to win a gold medal. Also, at these competitions people in charge of picking their country's Olympic team will be watching to see who has the skills to be part of the team. Those who do may be on their way to the Olympic Games. Those who don't will be on their way back home.

Finally, after hours, days, weeks, months and years of practicing and competing in competitions, those athletes deemed good enough to make the Olympic team will represent their country at the Olympic Games. But even that does not guarantee that they will win a medal. They will have to work even harder as they compete against the world's best athletes. If they have worked really hard and developed the skills that they need, they could win the ultimate prize, a gold medal in the Olympic Games.

Here's the point I am trying to make. Just like you cannot become an Olympic athlete in one day, you cannot become a leader in one day. It takes time because it's a process. And it does not happen automatically. You must work at it. You must decide every day that you are going to do the things that will make you a better leader, just like the athlete must decide every day to practice and learn the skills he or she needs to be a better athlete.

If I just practice, train, and learn leadership skills, I may become an average leader. But if I persevere and pass the tests and trials that come my way, it will be like winning medals at local, national or international competitions. If I do this, I can become a good leader. If I can stick with it my whole life, if I can persevere and keep learning the skills and doing the things that good leaders do, and also help others to grow in their leadership roles, then I may become a great leader. That would be like winning a gold medal at the Olympic Games.

Why don't you take a moment to pause the DVD and memorize the Law of Process and the key verse now?

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*[Discussion – in pairs or groups of 3 or 4]*

- a) Have you ever faced trials or tests in your life? What was your attitude or response to those trials?*
- b) We talked about how becoming a better leader is a process much like an athlete training to compete in the Olympic Games. What are some of the*

*things you are doing and learning to become a better leader?*

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As we study the Law of Process in this lesson, we are going to look at the life of Joseph. Let's take a quick look at the setting for our story. If you look at the slide on the screen right now, you will see where the story of Joseph fits into history.

There was a man named Abram who lived in Ur of the Chaldeans. God called him and told him to go to a land that he would show him. Abram obeyed God and went to the land of Canaan where God established his covenant with him and changed his name to Abraham.

When Abraham was one hundred years old the son God promised him was born. His son was named Isaac. Isaac married a woman named Rebekah and they had twin sons named Esau and Jacob.

Jacob tricked Esau into giving up his birthright as the firstborn, and Esau became angry with him and plotted to kill him. In about 1754 B.C. Jacob fled for his life and went to his uncle Laban. Jacob married both of Laban's daughters, Leah and Rachael, and they had eleven sons and one daughter. His eleventh son, Joseph was born in about 1740 B.C. Jacob had one more son named Benjamin after he returned to his father Isaac in Canaan.

When he was about seventeen years old, Joseph had two dreams in which he saw his father and brothers bowing down before him. Joseph was his father's favorite, and his brothers were already jealous of him. So when he told them about his dreams, they hated him even more and started plotting of a way to get rid of him. In about 1723 B.C. they sold Joseph as a slave to a caravan of merchants who were going south to Egypt.

The merchants took Joseph to Egypt where they sold him to a rich man named Potiphar. The Lord gave Joseph favor in Potiphar's eyes and he was put in charge of the whole household. After a while, Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, but when he repeatedly refused her, she said that he tried to rape her. Potiphar had him thrown in prison in about 1712 B.C.

Again God gave Joseph favor and soon he was put in charge of the whole prison. While in prison, Joseph interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker who were also in prison. After a while the cupbearer was reinstated to Pharaoh's service. When Pharaoh also had dreams that he could not understand, the cupbearer remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about him. In 1710 B.C. Joseph was summoned to Pharaoh and interpreted the dreams for him.

Joseph told him that God was planning to send seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine in all the land. Then Joseph told Pharaoh that he should find a man to put in charge of storing supplies during the years of plenty so that there would be food to eat in the years of famine. Pharaoh decided that Joseph should be that

man and put him in charge of the whole land. He was second in command only to Pharaoh himself.

God had taken Joseph through a process of preparation. First he was in the pit where his brothers put him because he was boastful and prideful. Then he went to prison because he was falsely accused of rape. Finally he ended up in the palace in the second highest position in the whole land.

But our story does not end there. The seven years of famine came after the seven years of plenty, just like Joseph said they would. It affected all the surrounding lands, not just Egypt. But, because of Joseph's careful management, Egypt was the only place that had any food. When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he sent his sons, all of them except Benjamin the youngest, to go and buy grain.

Joseph's brothers arrived in Egypt to buy food and bowed before Joseph, just as he had seen in his dream. They did not recognize Joseph, but he recognized them. Joseph ordered his servants to fill their sacks and to put their silver back in the sacks. Then he told his brothers that they had to return with their youngest brother. He had Simeon bound and put in prison to make sure they would return.

Joseph's brothers returned to their father and told him all that had happened. A short while later they went back to Egypt with their youngest brother, Benjamin. Joseph again filled their sacks with grain and again each one's silver was put back into his sack. Before they returned to their father, Joseph could not control himself anymore and revealed himself to his brothers. When Pharaoh heard that Joseph's brothers were there, he was very pleased. He told them to go back and get their father and bring him to Egypt. He promised to give them the best of the land of Egypt. So Joseph's brothers returned to Canaan and brought their father to Egypt, where they all bowed before Joseph.

God had given Joseph a dream when he was young, about 17 years old. But he was not ready then for the dream to come to pass. God had to take Joseph through a process to prepare him for his ultimate purpose. Thirteen years later, when Joseph was 30 years old, the dream began to come to pass, when Joseph became a great leader in the land of Egypt. But it was still longer until the dreams were completely fulfilled. It was more than 20 years after God gave Joseph his dreams – remember there were seven years of plenty and some years of famine before his brothers went to Egypt – that they were completely fulfilled, when first his brothers and then his father bowed down before him.

Joseph could not handle the dreams when he first received them. He had to grow and mature into the man God needed him to be. That's what the leadership Law of Process is all about.

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Before we go any further in our lesson, it would be good for you to read the scriptures pertaining to this story. Why don't you stop right now to take a moment and read the following scriptures if you have not done so already?

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*Scriptures to read: Genesis 37:1-36, Genesis 39:1 to 42:6, Genesis 47:13-26*

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## **The Story of Joseph**

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Let's look at our story in more detail now. We will start with Abram, who was Joseph's great grandfather. Abram was born in Ur of the Chaldeans.

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Some time later he left Ur with his father Terah, his wife Sarai, and his nephew Lot. They were on their way to the land of Canaan, but only got as far as Haran where they settled. Terah died while they were living in Haran.

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When Abram was seventy-five years old, God spoke to him and told him to leave his country, his people and his father's household and go to a land that God would show him. Abram obeyed God and left Haran. He took his nephew Lot, his wife Sarai, and all the possessions and people they had accumulated while living in Haran, and set out for the land of Canaan.

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After Abram had lived in the land of Canaan for a while, God spoke to him and told him that he was going to give Abram a son. Abram believed that what God said would happen, even though he and his wife Sarai were old and Sarai was barren. Because Abram believed God, God called him a righteous man.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, God appeared to him again and reconfirmed his promise to Abram that he would have a son with Sarai. They were to name that son Isaac. At this time, God changed Abram's name to Abraham. Abram means "exalted father" and Abraham means "father of many." God also changed Sarai's name to Sarah. God promised Abraham that he would establish his covenant with Abraham and his son Isaac forever. As a sign of this covenant, Abraham and all the males with him were to be circumcised.

The Lord was gracious to Sarah just as he has said he would be, and she became pregnant and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the very time that God had promised him. Abraham named his son Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day. Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

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Sarah died when she was 127 years old. She and Abraham were living in the town of Hebron at the time. Abraham negotiated with Ephron the Hittite and purchased the field of Machpelah, which had a cave in it. He buried Sarah in the cave.

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When Abraham was old and well advanced in years, he called his chief servant to him and made him swear that he would not get a wife for his son Isaac from the daughters of Canaan. Instead, he told the servant to go to his relatives in the country from which he came and find a wife for Isaac from among them.

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So Abraham's servant went to Paddan-Aram to find a wife for Isaac. He came to a town named Nahor, which was named after a nephew of Abraham's, and there met a young woman named Rebekah. Abraham's servant talked to Rebekah's father Bethuel and her brother Laban to get their permission for her to return with him to Canaan. They asked Rebekah if she was willing to go and she said that she was.

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Rebekah traveled with Abraham's servant to the land of Canaan. When she arrived, she and Isaac were married. Isaac loved her because she brought him comfort after his mother's death. Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah.

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Abraham died when he was 175 years old. His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah with Sarah his wife.

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Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife Rebekah because she was barren. The Lord heard his prayer and Rebekah became pregnant and gave birth to twin boys named Esau and Jacob. After Jacob tricked Esau into giving up his birthright as the firstborn, Esau plotted to kill him.

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Rebekah, his mother told him to flee to her brother Laban who lived in Haran in the land of Paddan Aram. On the way to Haran, Jacob stopped for the night at Bethel where he had a dream of a stairway reaching to heaven. At the top of the stairway he saw the Lord standing. The Lord spoke to Jacob and promised that he would give the land he was sleeping on to Jacob's descendants.

Eventually Jacob arrived in Haran and found his uncle Laban, and began working for him. After about a month, Laban asked him what he would like in return for working for him.

Now Jacob had noticed Laban's daughters, Leah and Rachel. He especially noticed Rachel, with whom he had fallen in love when he first saw her. It was love at first sight. Jacob told Laban that he would work for him for seven years if he could have Rachel as his wife. Laban agreed.

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So Jacob worked for his uncle for seven years. The Bible says that the seven years

seemed like only a few days to Jacob because he was so in love with Rachel. At the end of the seven years he went to Laban and asked him to give him Rachel. Laban organized a wedding feast, but on the wedding night he sent Leah in to Jacob. Jacob lay with Leah thinking she was Rachel. In the morning, when it was light, he found out it was Leah and not Rachel that he had married.

Jacob went to Laban and asked why he had deceived him. He said he had worked for Rachel and wanted to know why Laban had given him Leah instead. Laban explained to him that it was not their custom to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. He told Jacob that if he finished Leah's bridal week he could have Rachel as well in return for another seven years work. Jacob agreed. He finished Leah's bridal week and Laban gave him Rachel also to be his wife. Jacob lay with Rachel also and he loved her more than Leah. He also worked for Laban for another seven years.

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The Lord saw that Leah was not loved as much as Rachel, so he opened up her womb and she bore Jacob four sons named Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah. When Rachel saw that she was not bearing any children, she gave her maidservant Bilhah to Jacob so that she could bear children on her behalf. Bilhah bore Jacob two sons named Dan and Naphtali. Now Leah saw that she had stopped having children so she gave her maidservant Zilpah to Jacob also. Zilpah bore Jacob two sons named Gad and Asher.

Leah's son Reuben found some mandrakes in a field and brought them to his mother. Rachel asked if she could have some. At first Leah was mad at her and said, "Wasn't it enough that you took away my husband? Will you take my son's mandrakes also?" So Rachel said that she could spend the night with Jacob in return for some mandrakes.

When Jacob came home from the fields that night Leah went out to meet him and told him that he had to sleep with her that night. So he did and she became pregnant and bore Jacob another son named Issachar. A short while later she conceived and bore another son named Zebulun. Then she bore Jacob a daughter named Dinah.

Then God remembered Rachel. He listened to her and opened her womb. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son named Joseph.

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Sometime later God told Jacob to return to the land of his fathers. So Jacob put his wives and children on camels and drove all his livestock ahead of him, along with all the goods he had accumulated in Paddan Aram to go home to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

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On the way back to Canaan Jacob wrestled with God at Peniel and was reunited with his brother Esau. When he arrived in Canaan, he went to Bethel where he had had his dream of a stairway to heaven. On this visit to Bethel God appeared to Jacob again and renewed his covenant with him. God also changed his name to Israel. We will continue to call him Jacob so that we don't confuse Israel the man with Israel the



nation.

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They left Bethel and were on their way to Bethlehem when Rachel went into labor. She gave birth to a son named Benjamin. Unfortunately, it was such a hard labor that she died as a result.

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Jacob finally came home to his father Isaac at Hebron. Isaac died in Hebron a little while later at the age of 180 years. His sons Esau and Jacob buried him with his father Abraham and his mother Sarah in the cave of Machpelah

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At this point of our story we begin to focus on the life of Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob, born to him by Rachel. When Joseph was seventeen years old, he was tending the sheep with some of his brothers and brought a bad report about them to his father Jacob. Now Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons because he had been born to him in his old age. He gave Joseph a richly ornamented robe. When his brothers saw that their father loved Joseph more than them, they became jealous of him and hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

About this time Joseph had a dream and when he told it to his brothers they hated him all the more. He told them that he saw them all in a field binding sheaves of grain when suddenly his sheaf rose and stood upright while all of their sheaves gathered around his and bowed down to it.

A little while later Joseph had another dream and again he told it to his brothers. This time he saw the sun and moon and eleven stars bowing down to him. When he told his father and his brothers his father rebuked him. His brothers were even more jealous of him.

Here we see God's call on Joseph's life. God has given him a dream or a vision for the future, but he is not mature enough to handle the dream. Notice how puffed up and arrogant he is at this point in his life.

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*[Discussion – in pairs or groups of 3 or 4]*

- a) *Has God given you a dream or a vision or a revelation for the future? Read Habakkuk 2:2-3. Have you written down what God has spoken to you?*
- b) *What is your attitude toward the dream or vision God has given you? Are you humbly and patiently waiting for the appointed time, or are you puffed up and impatiently trying to make it happen in your own strength?*

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Joseph's brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem. Jacob called Joseph to him and told him he wanted to send Joseph to find out how his brothers were doing. Joseph said he would go. When he arrived in Shechem he could not find his brothers.

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A man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him what he was looking for. He told the man he was looking for his brothers and asked if he knew where they were grazing the flocks. The man said they had moved on and that he overheard them say they were going to Dothan. Joseph went on to Dothan and found his brothers there.

His brothers saw him coming when he was still some distance away and immediately plotted to kill him. "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. "Let's kill him and throw him into one of these pits and say a wild beast devoured him. Then we'll see what becomes of his dreams."

When Reuben heard his brothers talking like this, he tried to rescue Joseph from their hands. He suggested they just throw Joseph in a pit, but not kill him. He planned to come back later when his brothers had gone to get Joseph out of the pit and bring him back to his father.

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So when Joseph arrived, his brothers quickly grabbed him and stripped him of the robe his father had given him. Then they threw him into a pit and sat down to eat their meal. While they were eating they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead on their way to Egypt. Their camels were loaded with all kinds of spices for trading in Egypt.

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Judah suddenly had a great idea. He said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites instead." So when the caravan came close enough, they pulled Joseph out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelite traders for twenty shekels of silver.

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When Reuben returned to the pit to get Joseph out he could not find him. Then his brothers told him that they had sold Joseph. Reuben was distraught. He knew his father would hold him accountable and he didn't know what he would tell his father now. His brothers took Joseph's robe and smeared it with the blood of a goat. Then they took the robe to their father and told them that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal.

When Jacob saw the coat he was devastated. He mourned for Joseph and refused to be comforted by any of his children.

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Meanwhile, the Ishmaelites took Joseph to Egypt. There they sold him to a rich man named Potiphar who was the captain of Pharaoh's guard. The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered. Joseph found favor in Potiphar's eyes so much so that Potiphar put him in charge of his whole household and of all that he owned. With Joseph in charge, the blessing of the Lord was on everything that Potiphar owned, both in his house and in his fields.

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Now Joseph was well built and handsome and, after a while, he caught the attention of Potiphar's wife. She tried to seduce him and get him to go to bed with her, but he refused. She spoke to Joseph day after day and he refused to go to bed with her or even to be with her.

One day, as he was going about his duties and no other servants were around, Potiphar's wife grabbed Joseph by the cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" Joseph left his cloak in her hands and fled out of the house.

When she saw that she had his cloak in her hands and that he had run out of the house, she called her servants to her and lied to them. She told them that Joseph had come into the house to sleep with her, but she screamed. Then she said that when she screamed Joseph ran out of the house so quickly that he left his cloak beside her. When Potiphar heard this story he became angry and had Joseph thrown in prison.

While Joseph was in prison, the Lord was with him. He showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners. The warden didn't worry about anything under Joseph's care because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

Sometime later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master. Pharaoh was angry with his two officials and had them thrown into the same prison where Joseph was confined. The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them.

After they had been in custody for some time, each of them had a dream on the same night. When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were looking down and depressed. So he asked them, "Why are your faces so sad today?"

"We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one who can interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."

So they told Joseph their dreams and he interpreted the dreams for them. He told the cupbearer that within three days Pharaoh would restore him to his position of cupbearer to the king. Joseph also asked the cupbearer to remember him and show him kindness by mentioning his case to Pharaoh when he was restored. Then Joseph interpreted the baker's dream. He told the baker that within three days Pharaoh would have him executed.

Now the third day was Pharaoh's birthday, and he gave a feast for all his officials. On that day he restored the cupbearer to his position and had the baker hanged. The interpretations were fulfilled exactly as Joseph said they would be. But the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph; he forgot about him.

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About two years later, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven fat cows, and they grazed among the reeds. After them, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. The cows that were ugly and thin ate up the seven fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted, but they were thin and scorched by the east wind. The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up.

In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.

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Suddenly the chief cupbearer remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh how he was able to interpret dreams. So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, who was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.

Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."

"I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."

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Notice how Joseph's attitude has changed since the time that he first had his own dreams. At that time he was young and arrogant and boastful about how he was going to be in charge of his whole family. But now, after he has gone through the process of growing and maturing in his leadership ability, he is humble and accepts no credit for being able to interpret any dream. He now recognizes that it is God who lifts up the humble and brings down the proud. He gives the glory to God.

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Pharaoh told Joseph his dreams exactly as he had seen them and Joseph interpreted them. He said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. The seven thin, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine. It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. Seven

years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon."

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Then Joseph told Pharaoh what should be done to prepare for what was coming. He suggested to Pharaoh that he look for a discerning and wise man to put in charge of the land of Egypt, and that he appoint commissioners over the land. Joseph said that these officials should store one-fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country would not be ruined by the famine.

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Pharaoh liked the plan and decided that since God had given Joseph all this wisdom, he should be the man in charge of the whole project. He then promoted Joseph to the highest position in the land, second only to himself. He took his ring, which represented his authority, and gave it to Joseph. He gave Joseph robes and fine linens and had Joseph ride in his chariot as his second-in-command. Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh. So far his process of preparation had taken thirteen years. Remember, he was seventeen years old when he had the dreams that God had given him.

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During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. He stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph and do what he tells you." Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, and all the surrounding countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine had spread throughout the world.

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Now Jacob had heard that there was grain in Egypt so he sent his sons, all of them except Benjamin, to go to Egypt and buy grain. Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the one who sold grain to all the people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. As soon as Joseph saw his brothers,

he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he asked. "From the land of Canaan," they replied, "to buy food."

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Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected." They denied it and said they just wanted to buy grain. Joseph told them they would be tested to see if they were lying. He told them to leave one brother in Egypt and return to their father. Then they must come back to Egypt and bring their youngest brother with them.

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Joseph had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes. He then gave orders to fill their bags with grain, and to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. After this was done for them, his brothers loaded their grain on their donkeys and left.

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When they arrived home to their father they told him everything. They said, "The man who is lord over the land spoke harshly to us and treated us as though we were spying on the land. But we said to him, 'We are honest men; we are not spies. We were twelve brothers, sons of one father. One is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in Canaan.'

"Then the man who is lord over the land said to us, 'This is how I will know whether you are honest men: Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take food for your starving households and go. But bring your youngest brother to me so I will know that you are not spies but honest men. Then I will give your brother back to you, and you can trade in the land.' "

Jacob was distraught. He could not bear the thought of sending Benjamin to Egypt and possibly losing him as he had Joseph.

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Not long after they returned, they had finished the grain they bought in Egypt. Jacob called his sons together and told them to return to Egypt and buy more grain. Judah reminded his father what the ruler of the land had said that they must return with their younger brother otherwise they would not receive food.

Eventually Jacob let Benjamin go. The brothers returned to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph. When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he sent his steward to prepare a meal for them at his own house. The steward took the brothers to Joseph's house where they prepared themselves and the gifts they had brought for Joseph. When Joseph appeared they presented their gifts to him and bowed low to the ground before him.

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When Joseph saw Benjamin, his own mother's son, he was overcome with emotions and had to leave the room quickly because he could not control himself. After he had wept for some time in his private room, he washed his face and then returned to his brothers. When everyone was seated for the meal, Joseph's brothers were astonished when noticed that they had been seated in order of their ages, from firstborn to the youngest.

After the meal Joseph gave instructions to the steward of his house to fill his brother's sacks with as much food as they could carry, and to put each one's silver in the mouth of his sack. He also told his steward to put his silver cup in the mouth of Benjamin's sack.

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The next morning, Joseph's brothers were sent on their way with their donkeys. They had not gone far from the city when Joseph said to his steward, "Go after those men at once, and when you catch up with them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid good with evil? Why have you stolen my master's cup' "

The steward caught up with Joseph's brother and confronted them, accusing them of stealing Joseph's silver cup. Of course they denied having the cup because they did not know it was in the sack. They were so confident that they did not have the cup that they told the steward if it were found in any of their sacks, the one who had it should die and the rest of them would become slaves.

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The steward agreed and they began opening sacks to examine them. When the cup was found in Benjamin's sack his brother's couldn't believe it. They tore their clothes in anguish. When they returned to the city to face Joseph, they gave themselves up to be Joseph's slaves. Joseph said it was not necessary for all of them to be his slaves, just the one in whose sack the cup was found.

At this Judah stepped forward and interceded on behalf of Benjamin. He begged Joseph not to keep him in Egypt saying that if they returned to their father Jacob without Benjamin, the grief would be too much for him to bear and he would surely die.

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Seeing their anguish, Joseph could not longer control himself. He dismissed his attendants and, when he was alone with his brothers, he made himself known to them. By this time he was weeping so loudly that everyone in Pharaoh's household heard him. Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" His brothers were so shocked and terrified that they could not answer him. Joseph reassured his brothers by saying to them, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God."

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When the news reached Pharaoh's palace that Joseph's brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased. Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers to load up their animals and return to the land of Canaan, and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land."

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So Joseph's brothers left Egypt and went back to their father Jacob as Pharaoh had commanded. When they arrived they told Jacob, "Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt." Jacob was so stunned that he did not believe them. But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived, and he said, "I am convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

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So Jacob left Canaan with all his sons and grandsons and his daughters and granddaughters and went to Egypt. They took all their livestock and all the possessions they had acquired while living in Canaan. Including Joseph and his two sons born to him in Egypt, there were a total of seventy descendants of Jacob that went to Egypt.

When Jacob arrived, Joseph went out to meet him. They embraced each other and cried for a long time. The Jacob said to Joseph, "Now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive."

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Jacob and his family settled in an area called the Land of Goshen. Joseph provided his father and brothers and their households with food as long as the famine continued. Jacob lived in Egypt for 17 years before he died at the age of 147. Before he died he made Joseph swear to him that he would take his bones back to Canaan to be buried with his fathers.

After Jacob died, Joseph's brothers again feared him. They thought that he might still hold a grudge against them. Joseph reassured them again by saying to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children."

Joseph continued to grow in his leadership ability. By the end of the famine, due to his management, all the lands belonged to Pharaoh and all the people were the slaves of Pharaoh. Joseph had been transformed as he submitted to the process that God took him through. He went from being an arrogant teenager to a leader of such stature that he literally was in charge of the whole world at the time.

*[Fade in PowerPoint Slide 35 – Pause DVD]*



*[Discussion – in pairs or groups of 3 or 4]*

- a) *Think about the process that God took Joseph through. Are you submitting to God's process for your life, or are you trying to do things your own way and in your own strength?*
- b) *Joseph had to go through many tough times to see his dream become a reality. Are you willing to allow God to take you through tough times to bring you to the place where his dream for your life can become a reality?*

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In many ways Joseph was like other great leaders. First, all leaders have a vision or a dream of what the future looks like. Second, the vision and the leader are inseparable. The leader's heart beats for the vision and will not be content until the vision is a reality. Joseph and his vision were destined by God to be intertwined. Third, no leader's vision can be kept a secret. At some point it must be made public. When a vision is shared the right way it can enhance a person's leadership. But when it is shared the wrong way, it creates problems. And that is, of course, what got Joseph into trouble.

Let's take a look now at the principles about the leadership Law of Process that we can learn from the story of Joseph. We will focus on four main observations, which are:

*[Fade in PowerPoint Slide 36]*

1. It's not the dream of a lifetime; it's the dream that takes a lifetime.

*[Click PowerPoint Slide 36]*

2. It takes time to grow as a leader.

*[Click PowerPoint Slide 36]*

3. It takes trials to grow as a leader.

*[Click PowerPoint Slide 36]*

4. It takes God's help to grow as a leader.

Let's get started with our first observation.

*[Fade in PowerPoint Slide 37]*

### ***1. It's not the dream of a lifetime; it's the dream that takes a lifetime.***

We live in a time where many things are instantly available to us. As a result, we can become impatient when things do not go as fast as we thought they would. The first thing we learn from the story of Joseph is that, just because we have a vision from God, does not mean that that vision will become a reality tomorrow.

There are two aspects to every vision. First there is the vision itself, or the picture of how we see the future. Second, there is the timing of the vision, or when that

picture is supposed to become a reality. To put it another way, we can say that a vision consists of God's purpose and God's timing. What I have found is that God's purpose does not always equal his timing. Often he reveals his purpose to us, but his timing is harder to figure out.

When it comes to finding out God's plan or vision for our lives, it is normally quite easy for us to embrace God's purpose for us. But, waiting for God's timing is often not easy to do at all. In Joseph's life it took thirteen years before things even began to look like the dreams that he saw. It was more than twenty years before they became a reality. And on the way God took Joseph through a process to prepare him for when the vision would finally happen.

Like most great leaders, Joseph had a vision long before he had the leadership ability to make it happen. His God-given destiny was to be a leader, but he did not start out as a very effective leader. Remember how we defined leadership? We said that leadership is influence. When he started out Joseph had no influence with his brothers or with anyone, other than perhaps his father. Before God could use him, Joseph had to be prepared, purified, and developed into the leader he had the potential to become.

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All great leaders need three things to prepare them:

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1. Time to mature them.

Like most great leaders Joseph labored in obscurity for a season of his life before becoming qualified to lead others. He was only seventeen when he had his dreams and was sold into slavery by his brothers. He finally stood before Pharaoh for the first time when he was thirty years old. It took thirteen years for him to go through the process of preparation before his dreams began to become a reality.

In the beginning he was an arrogant teenager. He liked the idea that his brothers would bow down to him. He had a lot of pride in his heart when he interpreted his own dreams. But when he interpreted Pharaoh's dreams thirteen years later, he was a changed man. Now he was humble. He was mature. God had equipped him to become a great leader. But it had taken time.

*[Click PowerPoint Slide 37]*

2. Trials to strengthen them.

When gold is mined from the ground it contains a lot of dirt or impurities. It has to go through a process of being ground up and repeatedly put through the fire to get those impurities out, before it becomes something of value and use.

Likewise, diamonds start out as nothing more than a lump of coal, black and ugly. But after years and years of extreme pressure they are transformed into

an object of beauty and value.

In much the same way, great leaders are formed only through trials. Joseph would never have reached his potential if he had stayed home. To become the leader that he did, he had to go through the process. He had to face the trials and hardships that he did. He had to experience the pit and the prison before he was able to enjoy the palace.

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3. God to bless them.

Without God, a leader can do nothing of real value. Jesus said in John 15:5, "He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing."

God blessed Joseph when he was in Potiphar's house as a slave. Then God blessed Joseph when he was in prison. Over and over, as we read his story, we hear words like these from Genesis 39:23, "The Lord was with Joseph; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper."

Joseph experienced the favor of God on his life. This was perhaps the most important thing that helped him to grow and succeed as a leader. If you're on God's side, you can't lose.

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## **2. It takes time to grow as a leader.**

It wasn't enough for Joseph to be his father's favorite, the one who received special favor and treatment above all his other brothers. Joseph had to rub it in.

When God gave Joseph a dream revealing that he would one day be the leader of his family, he was not mature or wise enough to keep it to himself. Instead he told everyone about it. His father rebuked him. His brothers wanted revenge, and they got it.

Early in Joseph's life his skill at working with people was weak. Even worse, he lacked experience, wisdom and humility. These are three qualities which can only be gained over time. If you look at Joseph's life you can see how time and experience helped him to grow in his leadership ability.

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Joseph went through four stages in his leadership growth. These are the four stages that every leader goes through as they grow in their leadership ability. Let's look at them in more detail:

*[Click PowerPoint Slide 38]*

1. Ignorance.

Every leader starts out in the ignorance stage. This is where we are ineffective

as a leader and we don't even know it. We do not know the qualities and skills that make a good leader. In other words, when it comes to leadership, we are ignorant.

This is where Joseph began. He did not understand the dynamics of his family. Either he was ignorant of how his brothers would react when he shared his dreams with them, or he just didn't care about the damage that would be done to his relationship with them.

Joseph didn't know what he was doing. He was doing and saying things without understanding the existing interpersonal issues between him and his brothers. The cost of his ignorance was alienation from his family for more than two decades.

*[Click PowerPoint Slide 38]*

## 2. Maturing.

The next stage of growing as a leader is the maturing stage. When a leader enters this stage they are still ineffective as a leader, but now at least they are aware of it. They now are aware that they do not have the qualities and skills that they need to be a good leader. This awareness gets them started in the process of growing as a leader.

It took a life-changing incident to get Joseph's attention and start him on the road to change. Thrust into slavery in Egypt he began to learn about what he did not know. He came to understand that leadership is difficult and carried a huge weight of responsibility.

Over the years Joseph experienced betrayal, and he received lessons in human nature, relationships and leadership. Each experience was part of a process through which God was molding his character. He developed patience and humility, and he began to recognize that God was his source of blessing and power.

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## 3. Recognition.

The third stage of leadership growth is the recognition stage. In this stage the leader has learned some leadership skills and is beginning to use those skills effectively as they influence other people. Not only have they learned some skills, but people start to recognize those skills in the leader. Their leadership ability is becoming obvious to those around them.

Leaders who show great skill when opportunity presents itself do so only because they have paid the price to prepare for that opportunity. Joseph entered this stage when he was about thirty years old. When he was called before Pharaoh, he performed with excellence and wisdom. He didn't succeed because he suddenly got good at age thirty. He succeeded because he had been paying the price for thirteen years.

Pharaoh recognized the wisdom and leadership skills in Joseph. Because of his wisdom and discernment, Joseph was made second in command of what was then the most powerful nation on earth.

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#### 4. Multiplication.

The final stage in the process of growing as a leader is the multiplication stage. In this stage the leader has been practicing good leadership skills for many years. Their leadership is effective, but they no longer have to think about what they are doing. It just comes naturally to them now because they have been doing it for so long.

For seven years, during the time of plenty in Egypt, Joseph skillfully executed his leadership plan. He filled the cities of Egypt with grain, and he prepared the country for the coming famine. His previous years of pain and growth were paying off in a big way. But you can really see how far his leadership had come by observing what he did during the seven years of famine that followed.

Joseph distributed food to the people of Egypt and to the people of surrounding nations. Even his own family came to him seeking food, not knowing that he was in charge. The dream that he had told them about when he was a teenager had come to pass. Now the ones who had doubted him, beaten him, and sold him into slavery were in need of his help. This was his chance to get even.

But Joseph chose to forgive them and give them food. Why? Because he was no longer Joseph, their little brother; now he was Joseph, the leader. He was operating out of years of leadership wisdom and experience. His actions flowed out of the character that God had developed in him, and he did what was right even when it was difficult. He saw the situation from God's perspective. When he finally revealed himself to his brothers they were terrified at what he might do to them. He told them not to worry because it was not them who sent him to Egypt, but God. He saw that it was God's plan all along.

To become an effective leader, you need time. But time alone will not guarantee that you will become an effective leader. If you do not discover the Law of Process and work at growing as a leader, you may remain in the stage of ignorance your entire life.

*[Fade in PowerPoint Slide 39 – Pause DVD]*

*[Discussion – in pairs or groups of 3 or 4]*

- a) *Joseph had to pay a price to see his dream become a reality. Are you willing to pay the price to accomplish your dream or vision?*
- b) *Think about the four stages of leadership growth that Joseph went through. Which stage are you in when it comes to your personal leadership growth?*

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### **3. It takes trials to grow as a leader.**

God has a plan for each of our lives. Only he truly knows the details of that plan, even though he reveals it to us as we begin to walk in it. We have already seen how God uses time to prepare and mature us for the things that lie ahead. But he not only uses time, he also uses trials. In fact, the larger the task and the greater the purpose that God has for us, usually the more difficult the trials.

When faced with adversity, hardships, and difficulties we have a choice to become either bitter or better. Joseph chose to become better. He certainly had plenty of opportunities to become negative. He could have held a grudge against many people: his brothers, the slave traders, Potiphar's wife, the chief butler. But instead of holding a grudge, he turned to God in the midst of his struggles and viewed those who had offended him as instruments in God's hands.

Why were Joseph's problems such an integral part of his growth as a leader? Because he was able to learn from each experience and became a better person and a better leader as a result.

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When we react positively to trials and hardships in our lives, several remarkable things happen. Let's look at some of them:

*[Click PowerPoint Slide 40]*

#### **1. We glorify God.**

Joseph didn't mope, rebel, or curse God for his troubles. Instead he gave credit to God for his victories. As God received the glory, Joseph received more of God's blessing upon his life.

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#### **2. We receive new opportunities.**

What could be worse than being sold into slavery by your own brothers and taken by force to a foreign country? As bad as that experience was for Joseph, it was the key to every other opportunity that he received. Without the trial of slavery, Joseph never would have experienced the triumph of leadership in such a powerful nation.

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#### **3. We develop integrity.**

Joseph was not in Potiphar's house for long before he faced a very difficult decision. He was already enjoying all the comforts of Potiphar's household. But then he had the opportunity to enjoy the man's wife also. He refused, even though it meant he would be falsely accused and go to prison.

It is only in testing that we discover the nature and depth of our character. We can say anything we want about our values, but when the pressure is on, that is when we will discover what our values really are.

*[Click PowerPoint Slide 40]*

4. We grow spiritually.

Joseph's positive attitude towards the trials that he faced caused him to grow closer to God. Because he didn't blame God, he could go to God and find peace in the midst of the trials. No matter how bad the situation looked, Joseph was able to see how God could turn it around for good.

After his father, Jacob, died, Joseph's brothers were concerned that he would turn against them. He reassured them by saying, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

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5. We are prepared in mind and heart for leadership.

It took more than a decade but Joseph eventually learned to value difficult people and situations. He saw them as God's instruments for his development. Joseph became a leader in Egypt only after he passed each test that he faced in life. By the time he became the second most powerful leader in the land, he was a proven leader. He had experienced personal misfortune, remained true to God and learned to lead in difficult circumstances. That gave him the wisdom and experience he needed for what lay ahead.

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#### **4. It takes God's help to grow as a leader.**

Like most great leaders Joseph labored in obscurity for a season of his life before he became qualified to lead others. It is during this period that God most often works to prepare the potential leader.

For Joseph, nearly twenty-three years passed from the time his brothers threw him in the pit and sold him as a slave, until the time that he revealed himself to them in the palace. But by then Joseph had come to learn that true progress only comes when it is orchestrated by God. After all, it is his purpose that we are fulfilling in our lives, not our own.

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As Joseph grew as a leader he learned that:

*[Click PowerPoint Slide 41]*

1. Self promotion cannot replace divine promotion.

Joseph learned the hard way that self promotion can never replace divine

promotion. When he tried to promote himself with his brothers he failed miserably. It was only as he learned to submit, as a slave, and chose to work diligently in Potiphar's house that it became evident that God's favor was with him. In prison he served the jail keeper and again God showed him favor and mercy.

When Joseph tried to take self promotion back into his hands, by recommending himself to Pharaoh's chief butler, God again made him wait. Two more years passed before Joseph was called before Pharaoh. By then Joseph had learned his lesson. He was content to recognize that God was in charge. When Pharaoh asked him to interpret his dreams, Joseph answered, "It is not me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace".

*[Click PowerPoint Slide 41]*

2. God is in charge of the process.

It took a lot of growth but Joseph eventually recognized that God was directing the process of his leadership development. And he recognized that he was being grown as a leader for a much greater purpose than he could have imagined.

By the time that Joseph's father Jacob died, Joseph had learned to see things more from God's perspective than from his own. When his brothers feared for their lives, Joseph summed up his life using the following words: "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Joseph could trace God's hand through his entire life. And he understood God's long-term plan for his people. When he was 110 years old he told his family, "I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." He understood how God had used his life and how he intended to help future generations.

There are many factors in our leadership development that are beyond our control. Joseph did not choose the timing of his life, the trials he faced, or the ways in which God blessed him. But he did choose to learn and to grow. Each of us must make that same choice, no matter what circumstances we face.

*[Fade in PowerPoint Slide 42 – Pause DVD]*

*[Discussion – in pairs or groups of 3 or 4]*

- a) *We saw how Joseph learned from the various trials that he faced and used them to grow as a leader. Do you make a practice of learning from the trials in your life?*
- b) *We saw how God helped Joseph and how Joseph eventually learned to see his circumstances from God's perspective. How has God helped you as a leader?*



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## **The Law of Process in the Life of Jesus**

If we look at the life of Jesus we see that even he had to go through a process of learning obedience. In Hebrews 5:7 the Bible says, "Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered."

*[Click PowerPoint Slide 43]*

And Luke 2:52 says, "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."

You see, Jesus could have come to earth fully grown and mature, but he did not. God's plan was for him to go through the process of growing and maturing just like any other human being. Ultimately, Jesus is the only human being that has ever lived a perfect life, but he had to learn obedience to God's plan and purpose for his life, just like the rest of us.

Here is some good news to think about. It's what I call the "two-for-one deal. When we think about being a disciple of Jesus we know that our goal is to become more like Jesus. Isn't that true? Now, what about when we think about leadership? Well, who is the greatest leader who ever lived? The answer is Jesus. Therefore, if I want to grow as a leader I must become more like Jesus also.

Do you see it? Either way, whether growing as a disciple or as a leader, Jesus is our goal. Therefore, the process of becoming a better disciple or a better leader is really the same process. It's the process of becoming more like Jesus.

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That brings us to the end of this lesson. In our next lesson we're going to look at the life of Nehemiah as we study the leadership Law of Navigation. We will look some more at why having a vision and planning is important for a leader. On the screen right now are the scriptures that you should read to remind yourself of the story of Nehemiah.

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Let's pray as we bring this lesson to a close.

Father God, I thank you that you are faithful to bring to completion the process that you have begun in my life. Thank you that you have a plan and a purpose, a dream for my life, just like you had a dream for Joseph's life. Thank you that it is your dream and that you will bring it about. I ask that you would give me the strength and grace to be able to submit to you as you lead me by your Holy Spirit through the process of growing as a leader. I say yes to your plan for my life. I agree with it and I say that I want you to do whatever you have to do in my life to make that plan become a reality. Thank you, Lord, that your plan is a good plan to give me a hope and a future. It is not a plan to harm me. I trust you with everything that I have, everything that I am

and everything that I hope to be. Thank you, Lord, for working in my life! I pray this in Jesus name. Amen.