

## Message for Week One: Listen to Your Dream

*“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions”* (Joel 2:28).

### What do we want?

“I just don’t know what I’m going to do,” Terry sobbed. “I don’t even know Chris any more. He doesn’t talk and when I try to draw him out he just shrugs and turns away. In the beginning he was wonderful. We talked for hours about everything, and he was always making me laugh. Now it seems like he has become a completely different person. He stays late at the office, and when he comes home he spends all his time on that computer. If I complain he gets angry and tells me I’m too controlling. I’ve tried to reason with him or get him to go to a counselor, but he doesn’t want to talk about it. Is there anything I can do?”

“I hate my job.” Joe’s monotone reflected boredom and suppressed frustration. “If I thought I could get another job in this economy I would quit in a minute. My boss is the biggest jerk I have ever known. Last week he asked me at the last minute to completely redo the project I’d been working on for four months. I had it on his desk two and a half weeks early, and he didn’t say a word about any changes. Then at the last minute he came up with all these changes he wanted, so I cancelled my dinner reservation--my wife was steaming!--and I stayed past midnight trying to make the revisions, but half of them didn’t make any sense at all, and it made the whole project look slapped together. Then at the meeting the next day they rejected the project and my boss says in front of everyone that next time he wants me to be better prepared. He does this all the time! He messes up and I get the blame.”

Joe wants work that is meaningful and satisfying. Terry wants her husband to communicate with her and share in their decisions and life together. All of us have things we are hoping for, and things that we would like to be different. Sometimes, like Joe and Terry, we are so unhappy with the people and the problems we face that we have a hard time identifying our goals or believing that our dreams are even possible.

The *Path of Integrity* is an invitation to journey together towards meaning and fulfillment in love, work and life. We have chosen the story of Joseph because it relates to challenges many of us face--broken family relationships, difficult work situations, issues with money, love, anger, jealousy, resentment and reconciliation. Joseph’s dream brought him through brokenness to wholeness, through rejection and hatred to acceptance and peace, so it provides an opportunity for us to explore the ways we can follow the same *Path of Integrity*.

### The Deeper Meaning

The story of Joseph and his brothers takes up the last third of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. It is a story that has survived thousands of years because it offers hope, encouragement and a sense of trust that God will see us through our difficult times. The story is helpful just for the story, yet it also contains deeper truths that can give us even greater guidance, strength and comfort. The deeper meaning of this story is explained in detail in the work *Secrets of Heaven (Arcana Coelestia)*. Yet that meaning is not the result of reinterpreting the Bible or reading new ideas into it, but rather it is the meaning we see when we read the

Bible in its own light, letting the Bible interpret itself, or rather letting the Author of the Bible guide us in understanding His own Books.

Jesus said that the Bible is all about loving God and loving your neighbor. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart," and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40). Since all of the Bible hangs on love for God and others, this is our starting point in looking at the story of Joseph. We ask, "How does this story teach us to love?" Love is one of the keys to opening up the deeper meaning.

### **Jesus in the Bible**

Another key to the deeper meaning of the Bible is Jesus Himself. Jesus showed that stories in the Old Testament were symbolic of His own life, even when the symbolism was not apparent in the literal meaning. For example, the story of the manna is symbolic of Jesus as the bread of life: "Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven" (John 6:32). Another story with an inner meaning referring to Jesus is the brass serpent which Moses put on a pole to bring healing to all who looked at it. Jesus said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (John 3:14). It is similar with the story of Jonah and the whale: "As Jonah was three days in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt 12:40). The temple in Jerusalem, which was the scene of many stories in the Old Testament, was also a symbol of Jesus (John 2:19-22). Later, He told His disciples that the Old Testament contains many prophecies about His own life that they had not understood. "Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.... He opened their understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27, 45).

The story of Joseph is beautiful when we simply take it at face value, and it becomes even more beautiful and powerful when we see that Joseph bears a striking resemblance to Jesus. Joseph was a shepherd and his father's beloved son, and Jesus was called the Good Shepherd and His Father's Beloved Son. Jesus, like Joseph, was stripped of His tunic. Both Jesus and Joseph were betrayed by a man named Judah for a handful of silver coins. Joseph was abandoned by his brothers, and later reunited with them. Jesus was abandoned by His disciples and later reunited with them. Both Joseph and Jesus were falsely accused of crime and imprisoned. Joseph was in prison with two criminals, one of whom would resume his place serving his king. Jesus was crucified with two criminals, one of whom would find his place in the kingdom of heaven. Joseph became ruler of all the land; Jesus became the ruler of heaven and earth. Jesus, like Joseph, provided food to hungry people. Joseph's brothers bowed down to him as Jesus' disciples bowed to Him. Finally, Joseph was reunited with his father as Jesus was united to the Father who was in Him.

These similarities between Jesus and Joseph are clues to the much more extensive parallels we see on the deepest level where the story of Joseph *is* the story of Jesus. To the extent that we are followers of Jesus, it will be our story as well, because we will be following the same Path.

We don't know what dreams Jesus may have had that could have prepared Him for His temptations and ministry, but we do know that His role as Messiah was prophesied throughout

the Scriptures. Just as Joseph received a prophecy of his future life in his dreams, Jesus found a prophecy of His future life in all the stories of the Old Testament. When He began His ministry in Galilee He quoted from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19, Isaiah 61:1-2). This and many other prophecies no doubt gave Him hope and comfort during His times of temptation and doubt.

### **Joseph's Dreams**

When we pick up the story, Jacob had become an old man with many children. There were four women who had borne his 13 children, but Rachel, the wife he really loved, had been childless for years until finally she bore Jacob's last two children, Joseph and Benjamin. Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin, and Jacob, grieving, turned his love for Rachel towards her sons. Jacob clearly favored Joseph and Benjamin. They were his youngest, and they were Rachel's children. In addition, Joseph reported that the other brothers were behaving badly.

To show his love for Joseph, Jacob gave him a special tunic of many colors. This made the brothers jealous. They hated Joseph, and could say nothing kind to him.

Then Joseph had a dream that he and his brothers were tying up sheaves of grain in the field and his brothers' sheaves bowed down to his. In another dream the sun, moon and eleven stars bowed down to Joseph. When Joseph's brothers heard about the dreams they were even more jealous and angry. Even his father was troubled with the thought that he, his other wife Leah and all his other sons would bow down to Joseph.

One day when the brothers were far from home finding pasture for the flocks, Jacob sent Joseph to see how his brothers were doing. They saw him coming and thought about killing him, but Judah suggested they make some profit by selling him as a slave instead. They sold him to a passing caravan for twenty pieces of silver. Then they took his precious tunic, drenched it in goat's blood and took it to their father Jacob. Jacob was heartbroken, convinced a wild beast had devoured Joseph, and the traders took Joseph to Egypt and sold him.

In the coming weeks we will follow Joseph as he endures slavery and prison, overcomes world hunger and brings peace to his conflicted family. And it all begins with Joseph having dreams that His brothers will respect and love him rather than despise him.

### **To Love and Be Loved**

The conflict between Joseph and his brothers is really an echo of the conflict between two sisters, Leah and Rachel, parents of Joseph and his brothers. These sisters competed for Jacob's love, and now their children were competing for his love, too. This story highlights our deepest longing—to love and be loved, fully, unreservedly, without doubt or fear.

The longing we feel for love comes from our source of life. Our consciousness, our energy and our very existence spring from Infinite Love. Love has within it an urge to love others and to be loved by them. When we love we want connection and unity. We want to share everything we have with others. We want to understand their feelings, cry with them when they are sad and laugh with them when they are happy. When we experience love, it is a small drop from the ocean of infinite love. Whatever we have sacrificed, suffered, achieved or

celebrated in the unfolding of love in our lives is the smallest reflection of the passion, joy and power of Infinite Love, just a faint gleam of a broken shard of glass in the brilliant sunshine.

We call this source of infinite love and life “God,” or “the Lord,” or a hundred other names. Perhaps we know very little of that love. We may wonder, “Does perfect love actually exist? Is it even possible?” Yet there is something in us that longs, struggles, endures, and hopes that love is possible. That desire for love is a small seed that eventually can become a fruitful tree. It is a half believed legend of a far-off land that impels us to set out on an unknown journey. It is a spark of divine fire implanted in the soul of every human being just to inspire us to search for that Love from which we came, but knowing, feeling, owning in our hearts that we are loved and that we love.

On an outward level this is the story of brothers conflicting and reconciling. On a deeper level we see the conflict and resolution between different desires and hopes we have. What is it that we want the most? Love? Wealth? Power? Pleasure? What is the goal that we will give everything to achieve? To what hope might we subordinate every desire?

On the deepest level, it is about that Infinite Divine Love seeking a place in our hearts—God wanting us to know, love and feel Him. Can we see that Love for what it is? Can we know that Perfect Love has manifested itself in our world and in our lives so that we can achieve that dream—to love and be loved?

### **Listen to Your Dreams**

Joseph was a dreamer. He dreamed that his brothers would offer him love and respect rather than contempt and hatred. There is something in us that dreams too, that we could call our “ruling love.” Looking at Joseph’s dreams I invite you to consider two passages from the Writings given to the New Church.

*“Our life itself is our love, and the kind of love we have determines the kind of life we have. In fact it determines who we are, but it is our dominant or governing love that makes us. It has many loves under it that spring from it. These loves appear in a different form, but still those individual loves are contained in the dominant love and make one kingdom with it. The dominant love is their king or head. It directs them and through them as intermediate goals it looks towards and intends its own purpose, which is the primary and ultimate purpose of all the loves. It does this both directly and indirectly. Our dominant love is what we love most of all.” (New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine 54)*

Our dominant love is not determined for us—it becomes dominant through a lifetime of choices we make, beginning with paying attention to what it is that we really care about.

*“It is the mark of someone wise to be aware of which ends are present in himself. Sometimes it does seem as though our ends are selfish when in fact they are not, for it is our nature to consider how everything affects ourselves. This we do regularly and habitually. But if you wish to know the ends you yourself have in view you can merely take note of your feeling of delight - whether it is on account of receiving praise and glory, or whether it is on account of performing some unselfish service. If it is the latter*

*delight which he feels, genuine affection is present in him. He ought also to take note of the varying states he passes through, for those states cause his feelings to vary considerably. A person is able to find these things out in himself, but not in others, for the ends in view to anyone's affection are known to the Lord alone." (Secrets of Heaven 3796.3)*

The Lord has a dream for each of us, to lead each of us to our own place in heaven (*Divine Providence* 67, 333). What makes the place our own is that we choose it and work for it and are willing to follow His lead. The Lord's plan for our lives unfolds over our whole lifetime. In the short term there may be other dreams or goals that we can identify:

- a happier relationship with someone we love.
- a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment in our work.
- freedom from addictions or character flaws in ourselves.

***Your task for this week is to find your dream.*** Pay attention to the desires in your heart and identify some dream that you can work towards during the coming weeks. Find your dream.